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‘A judicious and industrious compiler’

Mapping Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary of Commerce*¹

Section 1. Introduction

During the 18th century the range and number of economic publications produced in Britain expanded rapidly. Books, pamphlets, manuals, reports and periodicals abounded covering anything from colonial trade, foreign travel and foreign exchange rates, to new manufacturing techniques, agricultural improvements, commercial legislation, customs and taxation. Just for the period 1701-1750 and counting only new titles, Hanson (1963) listed just over 6500 works on economic topics published in Britain. The difficulties of access that this diffuse and ever growing literature posed to non-specialist readers eager to learn more about economic subjects, were acknowledged by mid-century commentators.

In 1760, for instance, Joseph Massie (?-1784) complained about the ‘irregular and broken Manner in which [the Knowledge of Commerce] hath been treated of by commercial Writers’. As a consequence, such knowledge could not ‘be come at, without collecting and reading more than a Thousand Books and Pamphlets’ (Massie 1760 [i,ii]). A decade earlier Malachy Postlethwayt (1707-1767) had identified the same problem:

Foreign and domestic trade admitting of so infinite variety of matter; and the knowledge communicated to the world, by those skilled and experienced therein, being scattered in an infinity of volumes, it is no easy matter to have immediate recourse to what may be occasionally requisite, either for the information of the Statesman, the Senator, the private Gentleman, the Trader, or the Manufacturer (Postlethwayt 1749: 26).

This abundance called for selection and classification and indeed these are exercises that were undertaken by contemporary connoisseurs like Massie, Anderson and Postlethwayt.² Especially the latter’s massive *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, first published

¹ I wish to thank Kingston University Business School for awarding me a grant to make possible the data-input exercise for the network research project of which the current paper is the first result. I thank PhD students Ibukunolu Babarinde, Ehsan Khajeh, Anna Ivanova, Florence Kode, Katy Schnitzler and Babangida Yohanna for their assistance with data inputting and I thank Dr Barry Avery for his indispensable help with the application of the network analysis software.

² Their activities are connected to some of the earliest proposals for publicly accessible commercial libraries in Britain. The most well-known, due to its surviving catalogue that lists 2418 titles, is Massie’s library. See Higgs (1935, xi) and Hoppit (2006). In the same period Postlethwayt compiled his commercial library probably for like reasons, namely for the use by students at his mercantile academy. The contents of this library are more difficult to assess for reasons explained in note 13 below. Similarly, Adam Anderson (1692-1765) mentioned that he intended to make the many sources used in his large work available to the public: ‘with respect to the very numerous and smaller tracts and pamphlets herin made use of [...] our Author has long since sorted them and had bound them up into many volumes of various sizes, exactly according to their particular subjects, many of which being curious and long ago out of print, were by him intended for a small beginning to a Mercantile library, when properly authorized, for the use and honour of the citizens of the first commercial city in Christendom’ (Anderson 1764, viii). Unfortunately, nothing is known about the exact content of Anderson’s library.

in a series of 155 issues between November 1751 and May 1755, must be considered as one of the foremost products of such efforts in this period. In the third quarter of the 18th century Postlethwayt's *Dictionary* was considered one of the 'most compleat works' on trade in the English language.³ Going through four editions within the next two decades, it was, as a later commentator observed, a book 'which from its great excellence at the time, completely superseded every former publication on the subject of commerce' (Anderson 1819: preface).⁴

Postlethwayt's 'excellence' did however not consist in any very original economic reasoning of any kind. Instead it consisted in the discerning selection and combination of what he considered the most authoritative *existing* works on the full range of topics that comprised the spacious subject of 'trade'. This much was obvious to contemporary readers. As the *Monthly Review* summed up his talents: '[u]pon the whole, though we cannot well allow Mr. Postlethwayt the merit of being, in all respects an original projector, it is but justice to declare him a judicious and industrious compiler' (Anonymous 1757: 113). For the purpose of the present exercise these are precisely the right qualifications, justifying our choice of Postlethwayt as a contemporary guide to the selection and classification of economic writings.

As Hoppit (2006) has shown, studies of how 18th century British students selected and classified the contemporary economic literature are bound to yield different 'contours' than the necessarily retrospective surveys of later generations of historians of economics. The approach Hoppit explored was to base a classification and ranking of the most 'important' economic authors on an examination of the contents of surviving catalogues of contemporary libraries.⁵ One drawback of such a novel approach is that the mere presence of books in libraries does not necessarily say much about the perceived relations between those works, and neither does it tell us much about which particular ideas contained in books or pamphlets may have attracted specific attention.

³ This description was used in a guide entitled *Directions for a proper choice of authors to form a Library* (N.N. 1766). It named Anderson's *History of Commerce* (1764) as the other principal work of reference in the area of 'Trade'. Since these two works were mentioned together, it is interesting to note that shortly after, on 25 March 1767, Adam Smith, who had recently started work on his *Wealth of Nations*, thanked his publisher Cadell for procuring for him the books by 'Anderson and Postlethwait' (see the discussion by Cannan 1895). Both works were present in Smith's library (see Mizuta 2000: 8 and 203 respectively).

⁴ Holdsworth (2016: 142) confirms this assessment, calling it 'the key text of English commercial knowledge from the mid eighteenth century'. Volume one of the first edition was published in September 1753, collecting the separate issues 1 to 84 that had appeared since November 1751. This was followed in November 1755 by the second volume, which contained issues 85 to 155. Due to its commercial success a second edition was published in 1757, a third revised edition in 1766, and a posthumous fourth edition in 1774. For the present study the first edition was used.

⁵ Hoppit first identifies 28 British economic authors from the 17th and 18th centuries on the basis of their names featuring in the secondary literature. Then he checks the frequency with which their works appear in catalogues of eleven libraries. He finds that works by Josiah Child and Charles Davenant are the most frequently occurring and concludes from this that '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'.

A complementary approach, also mentioned (but not attempted) by Hoppit (2006:97-8), would be a study of ‘the references made by authors to other authorities’.⁶ The main promise of such an approach is that it would yield more detailed insights not only into which authors were quoted most, when or in what language, but also into the specific topics on which and the context in which they were quoted. However, the construction of a quotation history of this kind that could make a reasonable claim to being systematic and representative for a period as a whole would require an enormous effort. An attempt to do this for the economic literature of the 18th century would, as indicated, require the processing of a very large body of texts. It would further be complicated by various technical difficulties that (for now) prevent the kind of automated data gathering that has become possible for the modern economic literature, such as the different quotation practice of the time.⁷

The current study, while examining ‘references made by authors to other authorities’, is therefore much more modest in scope. In the first place, it studies quotations in a single work by a single author. The only claim to relevance (though not to representativeness in any strict sense) is based on the fact that this work, Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary*, was a very substantial and conscious effort of a contemporaneous author to draw upon and collate a large body of literature. Second, Postlethwayt’s sources are traced only for a selection of entries. The main reason for this is that an attempt to list all sources used in the *entire* work, apart from being very laborious, would risk yielding an extensive but undifferentiated list of titles similar to a library catalogue.⁸ Instead it was judged more meaningful to attempt to select those entries that were more central to Postlethwayt’s effort of presenting the commercial practice and theory of his time. The sources he used in such ‘central’ entries may be said to be the more important authorities, at least in Postlethwayt’s opinion.

For this reason the current exercise proceeds in two steps. Section 3 reports on a mapping exercise, using network software, of the many cross-references between the entries in Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary*. This reveals the clustering, and by implication the overall classification of the range of topics covered in this publication as well as the entries that were cross-referenced most and hence can be said to have a more central role in Postlethwayt’s work. Sections 4 and 5 then consider an application, namely how such an analysis can help the study of the more substantive issue of the association and structuring of ideas. For this application a small number of related entries is selected. The justification for this selection is Postlethwayt’s repeatedly stated view that trade could be studied from two distinct perspectives, the ‘practical’ and the ‘political’ viewpoint. It was especially, the ‘political’ perspective that contemporary readers of the *Dictionary* recognised as a novel feature of the

⁶ Two further approaches Hoppit mentioned are an assessment of the likely impact of publications through an analysis of the number of reprints and editions produced (something attempted by Carpenter 1975) and the analysis of subscriber lists (which, however, are not very common in economic publications of the period).

⁷ For bibliometric approaches to the historiography of the modern (that is, roughly post-WW2) economic literature see n. 26 For the challenges posed by the quotation practice of Postlethwayt, a particularly slippery author, though not entirely atypical in his time, see below pp. 14-15

⁸ In fact, it might well, more or less, replicate the contents of Postlethwayt’s economic library of which we already have an (imperfect) record. See n.15.

work (see section 2). The topics covered in Postlethwayt's 'political' entries and the authorities cited there provides us with a picture of an emergent discourse that contemporary authors would soon start referring to as '*political economy*'.

Section 2. 'A perfect work for this Nation, as Savary's was for France'

Alphabetic works of reference were a novel literary phenomenon during the European Enlightenment. They can be seen as a response to, on the one hand, the rapidly expanding fields of knowledge and, on the other, steadily expanding educated readerships. As Yeo (2001: 25-7) notes the alphabetic format, as applied for example in Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopædia* of 1728, had the double attraction of logical flexibility and easy access. That is to say, such an ordering allowed compilers to expand materials without a pressing need to reconsider theoretical classifications, while at the same time allowing non-specialist readers to find information on distinct topics without having to familiarise themselves with learned or fragmented literatures. Besides general encyclopaedias or dictionaries of arts and sciences, the 18th century also saw works of reference focused on specific intellectual domains, such as gardening or geography. The principal early publication in the area of 'trade' was the *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* of Savary de Brûlons. First published in 1723, Savary's *Dictionnaire* met with considerable success going through various subsequent French editions as well as being emulated in other European countries throughout the 18th century.⁹

The 'extraordinary fund of commercial matter' (Postlethwayt 1749:23) contained in Savary's original work derived primarily from official documents, such as reports, accounts and regulations of *intendants*, inspectors and ambassadors, as well as from the abundant early modern merchant manual and travel literatures.¹⁰ As such the treatment of topics tended to be of a predominant technical character, something which motivated Redlich (1971: 78) to describe the *Dictionnaire* as 'a merchants' manual arranged alphabetically'. Redlich also emphasises that the foreign publications of the subsequent decades that tried to tap into the success of Savary's *Dictionnaire*, substantially altered the content and nature of their offerings in attempts to tailor their editions to their respective national audiences.¹¹

This is certainly the case with Postlethwayt's *Universal Dictionary*, which was an attempt to emulate the success of the French work in Britain. It was, as Johnson (1937: 188) put it, 'an amplified and Anglicized version of its French model'. The initiative for this English version appears to have come from the London publishers John and Paul Knapton, who clearly saw a market in Britain for such a work. '[S]ome years before' 1750 they engaged Postlethwayt to retain as much from the *Dictionnaire* as he thought proper and 'from his own skill and judgement and knowledge in trade and commerce [to make] such additions as to make a

⁹ For discussions of the contents and publication history of the *Dictionnaire* see Redlich (1971), Perrot (1992) and Patalano (2001).

¹⁰ About the merchant manual literature see Hoock (1987) and (1989).

¹¹ Redlich (1971) discusses, besides the English, also German, Russian and Italian emulations of Savary's *Dictionnaire* and makes the point that despite more or less extensive borrowing they were each adapted to their national readerships to such an extent that they can be considered as new works.

compleat dictionary of trade and commerce adapted to this nation and [it] should be a perfect a work in English, and for this nation, as Savary's was for France'.¹² Thus it was the intention from the start not simply to translate Savary's work, but to use it as the basis for a work that would make 'compleat' commercial knowledge available in the same alphabetical format but with content matter adapted for British readers.¹³

The Knaptons' reason for commissioning Postlethwayt was that he had been recommended as a person 'very proper for the undertaking of such a work'. This suitability was principally due to Postlethwayt's great knowledge of the commercial literature, which was due partly to his own training and practice as a merchant, but especially because of his efforts from the late 1730s to establish a mercantile academy.¹⁴ In the earliest plan for such a 'little Kind of merchantile University' he imagined that students would be required to 'read the most judicious Writers upon merchantile Affairs' (Postlethwayt n.d.: 21). This motivated him to collect over a period of 20 years a great number of books, pamphlets, private papers and accounts to serve as a library for his academy.¹⁵

Postlethwayt left only a rump of the materials contained in Savary's *Dictionnaire* intact, altering the original in a number of significant ways. First, he replaced many of the in excess of 9000, generally short, entries found in Savary's *Dictionnaire* with over 1500 often essay-length articles. Such entries were typically patchworks of extracts taken from different sources. Often they started with summaries of relevant legislation and a historical account of

¹² National Archives C12/2353/64.

¹³ Probably for marketing purposes, or as Postlethwayt put it 'to build upon an established Reputation', the title page of the *Dictionary* displayed prominently that the work was 'Translated from the French of the Celebrated Monsieur Savary', a claim that has been taken too seriously by some later students. The subtitle continued, however, 'with large Additions and Improvements incorporated through the Whole of the Work; which more particularly accommodate the same to the Trade and Navigation of these Kingdoms'. Throughout the period November 1751 to October 1755 the publication of individual issues was advertised on a nearly weekly basis (something which *inter alia* provides the best way of exactly dating the first availability of specific entries). It is interesting to see how, with the success of the publication, the adverts gradually started to drop references to Savary until the work was simply referred to as 'Postlethwayt's *Dictionary of Commerce*'. Some years later the Englishman would insist on the differences with the French example. His *Dictionary* was 'essentially different in Point of Matter, as well as in the manner of its Execution in general; and may with Truth be deemed an original Work of its Kind in this Kingdom' (Postlethwayt 1757b, i, liv)

¹⁴ For biographical details see Bennet (2011) who sketches his apprenticeship with writing-master Charles Snell (1667-1733), his early career as merchant, his secret side-line in pamphlet writing for the Walpole government and his work for the Royal African Company. Postlethwayt's attempts at founding a mercantile academy have been examined, somewhat unsatisfactorily, by Hollander (1953) and Redlich (1957). They merit a renewed study.

¹⁵ The often-repeated observation that Postlethwayt worked on his *Dictionary* for 20 years is probably incorrect. As noted above, the Knaptons had only engaged Postlethwayt 'some years before' 1750. The fact that Postlethwayt (1746) was only the first of his works published with the Knaptons suggests that their acquaintance dates from about that time. It is difficult to be sure about the size and contents of Postlethwayt's library. Presumably, most of it will have ended up in the sale of his books after his death. The catalogue for this sale (Davis and Reymers 1768) lists over 10,000 items, but there Postlethwayt's library was combined with those of several other men. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that titles of books and pamphlets on commercial matters mostly came from Postlethwayt's library. In fact, even though no systematic comparison has been carried out to date, it is clear that the titles of many of the sources that can be identified in the *Dictionary* are also found in the catalogue.

the topic, to be followed with one or more sections of ‘Remarks’. The value of this approach to a modern student is that it frequently brought together the views of what Postlethwayt considered to be the authorities on a subject. Occasionally, he included the opposing arguments of authors with the professed intention of providing a balanced treatment of a topic.¹⁶ But more commonly he presented what he saw as the consensus of the principal writers. This implies that on controversial topics the *Dictionary* was likely to present what was considered mainstream wisdom at the expense of dissenting voices.

Second, Postlethwayt drew a plethora of facts and extracts from perhaps over 500 supplementary sources many British, as well as more recent works from the continent, some of which are discussed below.¹⁷ Many of these sources belonged to two literatures neither of which had featured prominently in Savary. On the one hand, Postlethwayt made extensive use of the British political mercantile literature, the mass of pamphlets, treatises and surveys that had grown in number since the second half of the 17th century. On the other hand, Postlethwayt showed a particular interest in the somewhat separate ‘improvement’ literature, a typical mixture of Baconian science and social and commercial novelty writing.¹⁸

Contemporary reviewers of the *Dictionary* noticed these distinguishing characteristics. The most detailed of these reviews appeared in the *Journal Britannique* in November 1753 just after the publication of the first volume of the *Dictionary*.¹⁹ The reviewer, Matthieu Maty, pointed out, first, that Postlethwayt had used Savary’s work as no more than a *canevas*, correcting many mistakes and generally dealing with the topics in a more extensive and profound manner (*‘mieux approfondi’*). Second, and this was quite new for a work of this kind,

[Postlethwayt having] not been content with explaining the practical and experimental aspects of trade, he has also examined things in a larger perspective and in relation with politics and England’s true interests (Maty 1753: 245).²⁰

It is significant that Maty, who wrote for a French speaking and wider continental audience, should have highlighted the fact that Postlethwayt, by offering ‘political’ discussions of trade, went beyond the by then conventional compilations of more exclusively technical mercantile

¹⁶ For example, in the entry ‘Pegu’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 430), which first appeared by the end of July 1754, Postlethwayt reproduced large excerpts from a pamphlet that had just been published and was very critical of the monopoly of the East India Company, that is, *Some Thoughts on the Present State of our Trade to India* (1754, by ‘Z.A.’ a ‘merchant of London’). As the specific reason for their inclusion Postlethwayt stated that ‘I might be judged wanting in impartiality to pass [this view] over in silence’ and to show that he was ‘no monopolist’.

¹⁷ No complete list of the sources of the *Dictionary* has ever been made. The estimate of over 500 sources is from Fraser (1938) who criticises the much shorter list given by Johnson (1937). Unfortunately, she does not provide a list of her own.

¹⁸ Slack (2015) has recently chronicled this literature.

¹⁹ For Matthieu Maty (1718-1776) and the role his *Journal Britannique* played for some years in informing a Francophone readership across the European continent of novel British literature see Janssens (1975).

²⁰ *‘non content d’expliquer la partie pratique & experimentale du commerce, il a encore examiné les choses en grand & dans le rapport qu’elles ont avec la politique & les véritables interest de l’Angleterre’*.

knowledge, such as Savary's *Dictionnaire* or, within the English context, for example, Wyndham Beawes's *Lex Mercatoria Rediviva* (1752). It was precisely at this moment that in France a group of authors belonging to the so-called Gournay circle developed a similar perspective of *commerce politique*.²¹ Some commentators immediately drew parallels. The *Journal œconomique* of January 1755, in an article that noted almost all publications from the Gournay circle that had appeared up to that point, advised its readers also to read Maty's review of the English adaptation of Savary: 'Its translator [Postlethwayt] has made important additions to that book, which will doubtlessly not fail to enrich the French editions that will appear in the future' (Anonymous 1755: 19).

Postlethwayt for his part used a passage from the *Elémens du commerce* (1754) of Forbonnais, one of the most prominent members the Gournay circle, as the epigraph of the second volume of his *Dictionary*.²² In this passage Forbonnais drew a contrast between 'mechanical ideas' of commerce and the 'political' science of commerce. The former referred to technical knowledge of commercial *facts*, for example of the physical properties of various merchandise, and of *procedures* that constituted the activities of assayers, accountants, or arbitrators in foreign exchange. By contrast, the latter concerned the management at the national level of trades and economy-wide phenomena like rates of interest. Postlethwayt repeatedly highlighted this same distinction in his *Dictionary*:

[trade can be] studied both in a *practical* and a *political* light; the former to accomplish our traders in general to extend commerce for their private interest, the latter to enable us so to regulate the same by wise and salutary laws, that the nation may be gainers, not losers by it (Postlethwayt 1751-5, entry Britain I, 349; emphases added).²³

It was the 'political' perspective that was novel for a work of reference of the kind Postlethwayt produced and it is for this reason that in sections 4 and 5 we will pay some special attention to the contents and sources of some of the relevant entries. First, however, we will describe the more general mapping exercise of cross references in Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*.

Section 3. Presentation of the general results

Postlethwayt's *Dictionary* is an extensive work with a main body of 1867 densely printed folio pages. With an average of more than 700 words per page, the total word count is about 1.3 million. Unfortunately, despite the author's arguments to the contrary in the general

²¹ On the Gournay Circle see especially the collection of essays edited by Charles, Lefebvre and Théré (2011). For the term *commerce politique* see the contribution of Steiner in that collection.

²² The passage Postlethwayt used as an epigraph is found on the last page of the (unnumbered] Avertissement of the second edition of Forbonnais's work. In van den Berg (2017) it is shown that while Postlethwayt's acquaintance with Forbonnais's *Elémens* probably came too late for him to be able to include more passages in his *Dictionary*, in his subsequent publications he would plagiarise the Frenchman at length.

²³ Similar statements can be found in Postlethwayt (1749: 27) (1750: 63-74) (1751-5, i, introduction vii; i, 547 entry 'Commerce'; ii, 792 entry 'Trade').

preface (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, xiii-xxii) a reasoned structure or classification is missing from the work.²⁴ However, what Postlethwayt did provide, as he made his progress through the alphabet, were copious cross-references between entries. Possibly in imitation of Chambers *Cyclopædia* (see Yeo 2001: 114), such cross-references were in the first instance intended as guidance to readers for further reading on related topics and themes. For the research project of which the current paper is a part, these cross-references were used to reconstruct the linkages and patterns between topics covered in the *Dictionary*. To this purpose spreadsheets were created recording the names of all entries and, wherever present, the cross-references to other entries.²⁵ From this dataset a single network map was generated which is shown in appendix A.²⁶ Each of the 770 nodes on the map represents a single *Dictionary* entry. Only those entries are included that contain one or more cross-references *to* other entries, and/or are cross-referenced *from* one or more other entries elsewhere in the *Dictionary*. The directed arrows show the ‘from...to’ connections between entries. In total 1571 entries were recorded, which means that 801 entries (or about 51% of the total), without any cross-references ‘to’ or ‘from’, are omitted from the mapping. The network analysis software determines the positions on the map of the included entries on the basis of the number of cross-references amongst them. That is to say, entries with larger numbers of cross-references to mutual sets of entries are placed closer together. Also, generally speaking the entries with larger numbers of ‘from’ and ‘to’ cross-references are given more central positions on the map.²⁷

One should take some care with the interpretation of the positions of individual entries on the map. In particular, a central position of an entry does not necessarily mean that its content is especially rich or fundamental to the wider arguments that Postlethwayt put forward in his *Dictionary*. To take an example, one could get the impression that the entry ‘Trade’ (number 1541) is particularly important because of its very central position, which is due to its multiple links. However, a closer look at its exactly 100 links reveals that they consist of no fewer than 90 references *from* Trade to other entries, and that only 10 links represent cross-references from entries elsewhere in the *Dictionary* *to* ‘Trade’. One may say therefore that this entry functions very much as a “sign post” to other entries where the further substance can be found of the arguments that the reader only finds summarised in ‘Trade’. Arguably, more significant discussions tend to be contained in entries with many ‘incoming’ arrows, that is, ones for which repeated references are found elsewhere in the *Dictionary*.²⁸ For

²⁴ For more details about of the making of Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* see Cantillon (2015: 19-20).

²⁵ Multiple cross-references from an entry to the same other entry were recorded as single occurrences.

²⁶ The application of network analysis to the bibliometric study of links between, and common themes shared by, digital texts is an area of increasing interest (for introductions see Park 2003 and van Eck 2011). Claveau and Gingras (2016) is a recent bibliometric study of the modern economic journal literature.

²⁷ The current paper omits statistical measures for the analysis of centrality or connectedness of individual entries and clusters of entries. Such measures, with an interpretation of their meanings, will be given in a next stage of our project.

²⁸ However, here too there are exceptions. For example, the entry ‘Silver’ (numbered 1506) is referred to in 22 entries elsewhere in the *Dictionary*, but disappoints by containing none of the monetary theory that some of those references seem to promise. That is to say, three of the references to ‘Silver’ occur in entries with key

example, the entry ‘Credit, or Public Credit’ (numbered 989), to which 27 other entries have references, does indeed contain some noteworthy discussions of the topic.

Generally speaking, entries that are clustered together tend to cover related subjects, themes or perspectives. An exploration of the ‘neighbourhood’ of an entry of interest therefore often leads to related material elsewhere in the *Dictionary*. This of course reflects the fact that Postlethwayt intended the cross-references in the first place as guidance to further reading. Thus, one can find distinct clusters of entries relating to, for example accounting (marked A in appendix A), or colonial trade (B), or metallurgy (C). At the same time as providing possible insights into how readers in the past used the work,²⁹ the picture as a whole can be interpreted as something like Postlethwayt’s “mind map”. That is to say, it provides insights in his understanding of how the topics covered in his *Dictionary* cohere, i.e. are either classed together or grouped into distinct areas.

One significant finding from a closer inspection of the overall mapping is that the groupings do not only reflect a classification by subject matter (as in the examples given in the previous paragraph). They also reflect Postlethwayt’s understanding of the mercantile literature as dividing into two perspectives or levels of analysis in the study of trade, that is, the already noted distinction between the ‘practical’ aspects of trade and the ‘political’ or ‘national’ perspective on trade. To be sure, Postlethwayt intended his work explicitly to cover *both* types of knowledge, referring to it as ‘this practical and political Dictionary of Commerce’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, entry Coin, i, 531). As such the work addressed several audiences at the same time, being ‘equally useful to the practical merchant and trader as to the senator and private gentleman’ (Postlethwayt 1749:23). At the same time the distinction between the two perspectives is, at least to some extent, reflected in the mapping: many of the entries that develop the ‘political’ or ‘national’ perspective have ended up grouped closely together in the centre of the map.³⁰ This central part of the map contains most of the entries that dealt with

fragments on monetary theory taken from Cantillon (‘Barter’, ‘Interest’, and ‘Money’) and some other entries like ‘Bullion’, ‘England’ and ‘Exchange’, also suggest that ‘Silver’ was to contain a discussion of the metal in its use as money. One gets the impression that the fact that such a discussion is omitted has something to do with the haste with which Postlethwayt worked especially towards the end of the alphabet (see Cantillon 2015: 20). Another indication for this is that there are about 180 ‘phantom’ references (references to entries that do not in fact occur in the *Dictionary*). Nearly 90% of these are forward references, that is, to promised entries later in the alphabet, and nearly 40% point to words that start with S to Z.

²⁹ Henry and Bitter (2007) study the use of the *Dictionary* in the early-19th century by one young American merchant, John Myers, for his private commercial education. In order to teach himself accounting Myers studied a group of entries that would have been very easy to find using Postlethwayt’s cross-references. The map in appendix 1 when examined in detail offers various other guides to topics which readers, interested in particular subjects, would have wanted to study in conjunction. However, the area of accounting was somewhat special in the sense that it actually offered real instruction to readers. This was due to Postlethwayt’s particular expertise on the subject. In the prospectus for his *Dictionary* he specifically boasted that this would be a strong trait of the work: ‘*Book-keeping*, or the art of accomptantship, by *double entry*, being absolutely necessary in a work of this nature, there will be exhibited a system thereof in miniature; the knowledge of which may prove as useful to the *noblemen* and *gentlemen*, both in their public and private capacity, as to the merchant and trader’ (Postlethwayt 1749:26).

³⁰ One main reason why the patterns do not reflect this distinction fully is that often the two perspectives are presented in the *same* entries. Sometimes, but not always, this occurs in distinct subsections. For example, the entry ‘Exchange’ first deals with the technical operations of currency exchange arbitration. This is then followed

the kind of knowledge of the economy that Postlethwayt judged to be most immediately relevant to men of state, legislators and, more generally, gentlemen contemplating the wealth of the nation. For the composition of these entries he used extracts from a large number of British and some foreign sources that had developed aspects of this ‘political’ perspective. It is a subgroup of these kinds of entries that is examined more closely in the next two sections.

Section 4. Isolating the ‘political’ perspective

The central grouping of entries is still rather large, consisting of well over 100 items. In order to narrow down this grouping further, it was decided to employ some ‘inside knowledge’.³¹ If one wishes to know what were considered the principal topics of *political* considerations of trade then one can take a lead, for example, from a prominent British economist of the time Sir James Steuart (1712-80). In his *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, a book published over a decade after Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* but very much steeped in the same literature, Steuart described his work as an attempt

to collect and arrange some elements relating to the most interesting branches of modern policy, such as *population, agriculture, trade, industry, money, coin, interest, circulation, banks, exchange, public credit, and taxes* (Steuart 1767, 1: 6-7).³²

Not only did Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* devote entries to all of these topics,³³ there existed multiple cross-references between these entries. Moreover, and rather remarkably, within the network that connects these entries there was one prior author that emerges as Postlethwayt’s guiding light. This author was Richard Cantillon. What is remarkable about this is, first, that Postlethwayt had access to Cantillon’s *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General* work at all. A manuscript copy of this work, written in the late 1720s or early 1730s but which had

under a separate subheading by a discussion ‘Of exchange in a political light’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 741), which is in fact taken verbatim and unacknowledged from Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* (see below n.59). When entries that include both ‘practical’ and ‘political’ discussions tend to have cross-references both to entries that are predominantly technical in character and to entries that are predominantly general economic discussions, they weaken the distinctive clustering with regards to the two perspectives.

³¹ For the contrast between purely statistical selections of economic topics and selections based on ‘inside-knowledge’ see De Vroey (2016).

³² This same list of topics appeared in the subtitle of Steuart’s work.

³³ To be precise, the *Dictionary* has an entry with the title ‘People’, rather than ‘Population’. This reflects the fact that the term ‘population’ only became more commonly used in English in the later 1750s and 1760s. For a discussion see Théré and Rohrbasser (2011). ‘People’ did, however, already contain discussions that would soon become known as the theory of population. Agriculture was treated in entries like ‘Husbandry’, ‘Landed Interest’ and ‘Manure’. All other topics listed by Steuart had *Dictionary* entries with exactly the same titles devoted to them.

remained unpublished, must have ended up in Postlethwayt's hands by the end of the 1740s at the latest.³⁴

The second reason why his use of Cantillon's writings is special has to do with what may be called the double character of that work. On the one hand, some of the themes in Cantillon's *Essay* resembled common preoccupations of the 'mercantile' literature of the first decades of the 18th century, and indeed still of Steuart's *Inquiry*. That is to say, one finds in Cantillon a 'comparative neglect of questions of production and distribution, and a much greater emphasis on matters relating to international trade and monetary theory' (Groenewegen 2002: 55). At the same time, in terms of structure and method of reasoning the *Essay* has more in common with the economic treatises of the second half of the 18th century. Indeed, upon its publication in print in France in 1755 the *Essai* provided something of a novel template for the kind of systematic and more abstract analysis that came to characterise 'political economy'.

At first sight, Postlethwayt's choice to disperse extended fragments from the *Essay* across a number of alphabetically arranged *Dictionary* entries appears to have resulted in a very disjointed presentation of Cantillon's work.³⁵ What is more, in purely quantitative terms the significance of the fragments Postlethwayt plagiarised from Cantillon is relatively small: they constitute less than 1% of the overall content of the *Dictionary* (see van den Berg 2012: 874). Nevertheless, this belies their importance to the wider conception of the work. For Postlethwayt the various entries that plagiarised fragments from Cantillon were of a fundamental importance for structuring the 'political' perspective he tried to offer. This can be seen, for example, in the following passage from the entry 'Interest', at the start of a subsection carrying the typical heading *Of the INTEREST of MONEY, considered in a national and political view*:

Under the article BARTER we have, from *the plainest principles of reason*, shewed the nature of money and commodities, considered by way of exchange for each other; also under the articles CASH and CIRCULATION of MONEY, as well as the article SILVER, we have pursued this point, upon *one consistent plan of reasoning*, we apprehend. And agreeably to the same principles, we shall now inquire into the interest of money (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 995-6; emphases added).

The suggestion in this passage of 'one consistent plan of reasoning' and the application of the 'plainest principles of reason' is perhaps the closest Postlethwayt comes to claiming that a systematic approach to economic analysis underpins his *Dictionary*. And since all of the entries mentioned in the passage, apart from 'Silver', reproduced extended fragments from the *Essay*, one may say that Postlethwayt organised his 'political' discussions of trade in his

³⁴ For more details on how this may have happened see Cantillon (2015: 18-19). The content of the manuscript to which Postlethwayt had access probably differed in a number of respects from the manuscript on which the slightly later French print edition of the *Essai* of 1755 was based, but that issue is left to one side here.

³⁵ Indeed, one consequence of this disjointed and unacknowledged presentation was that it took until the end of the 19th century for students to realize that significant parts of Cantillon's work were present in the *Dictionary* at all. Cantillon (2015) takes out all fragments of the *Dictionary* that are most likely to have been due to Cantillon and presents them in the order of the French *Essai* of 1755. In a sense the current paper does the opposite by considering the fragments in the context in which Postlethwayt presented them.

Dictionary around Cantillon's contribution.³⁶ Thus, in a sense, Postlethwayt did not just appropriate the substantive economic ideas he found in Cantillon's manuscript, he also utilised them as a kind of backbone for part of the 'political' perspective of his *Dictionary*, by placing them in entries whose fundamental importance he signalled by multiple cross-references from other entries.

This provides us with a lead to reconstructing his supposed 'consistent plan' by focussing on one particular subset of entries, namely those that can be associated with Postlethwayt's borrowings from Cantillon. This subset, shown in figure 1, includes all entries, 78 in total, that (a) contain fragments taken from Cantillon's *Essay* (the twelve indicated with letters) plus (b) those 66 that are either cross-referenced *from* or that contain cross-references *to* those twelve entries. The figure represents the context in which Postlethwayt presented Cantillon's work in his *Dictionary*. At the same time it captures an important part of the entries that contained expositions of trade in 'a political light'.³⁷

³⁶ The contents of the entries 'Barter', 'Cash' and 'Circulation' corresponded respectively to that of the chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the second part of the French *Essai*. The further reference to 'Silver' may indicate that Postlethwayt at some point intended to include a further fragment from Cantillon in that entry. See n.28 above and Cantillon (2015: 321)

³⁷ Due to the selection criterion, some of the entries included in figure 1 seem less central than they are within the full dataset. For example, entry 1458 'Revenue, National' besides references to 'Coin' (966) and 'Labour' (1206) has five more cross-references to other entries and there are also seven entries elsewhere in the *Dictionary* that refer to 'Revenue, National'. None of the latter are included because they are 'one step' removed from the entries that contain fragments from Cantillon.

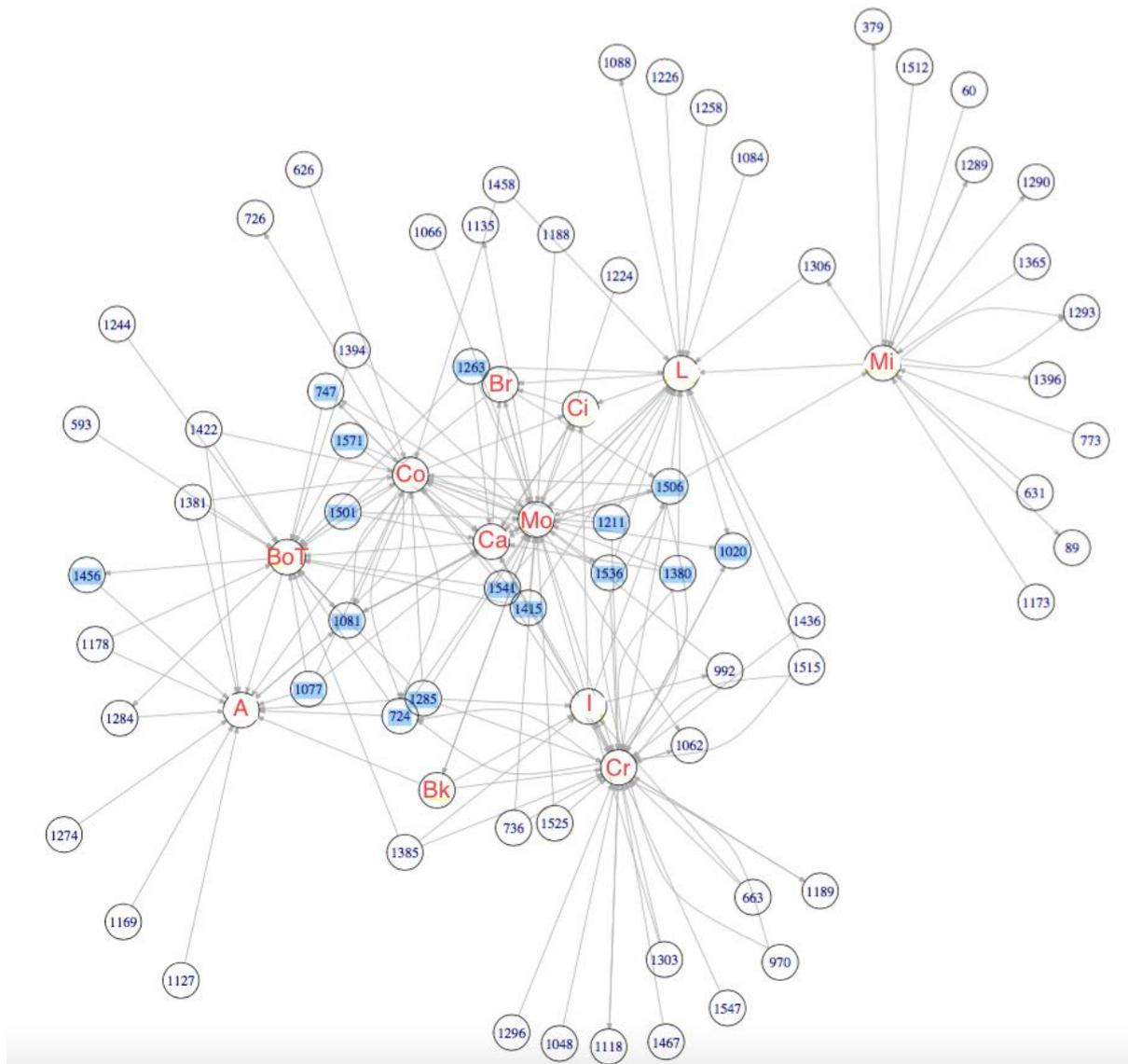


Figure 1. *The setting of Cantillon’s writing in the Dictionary.* Nodes indicated with letters refer to entries with fragments taken from Cantillon’s *Essay*: A: ‘Arbitration’; BoT: ‘Balance of Trade’; Bk: ‘Banking’; Br: ‘Barter’; Ca: ‘Cash’; Ci: ‘Circulation’; Co: ‘Coin’; Cr: ‘Credit’; I: ‘Interest’; L: ‘Labour’; Mi: ‘Mines’; Mo: ‘Money’. Appendix B shows a list of the other entries in this figure.

With regards to the additional 66 entries, it was judged that the larger the number of ‘to’ and/or ‘from’ cross-references to the entries highlighted in yellow, the more likely they were to contain matter that Postlethwayt thought to be complementary to the ideas developed by Cantillon. Thus, for the purpose of a closer study of the content and sources of the entries (below in section 5), it was decided to select only those additional entries that have four or more cross-references to and/or from the entries that contain fragments from Cantillon’s *Essay*. This results in a subgroup of 16 entries (shaded in figure 1, see appendix B for identification) in addition to the 12 indicated with letters. Reducing the number of 66 additional entries to 16 has as a desirable consequence that most entries that have a purely ‘practical’ content are left aside.³⁸ For example, all entries that have a single link with the

³⁸ The only remaining entry that consists of a pure technical discussion of commercial practice is ‘Remittance’. It is not obviously borrowing from any prior sources.

entry 'Mines', such as 'Assay' (379) or 'Smelting' (1512) etc., contain exclusively technical discussions. At the same time the criterion of only considering entries with four or more links does admittedly come at some cost in that some with 'political' discussions based on interesting sources, are not considered in the following.³⁹

One of the things the picture shows is that, in terms of cross-references, some entries are more prominent than others. For example, the entry 'Money' has a central place because no fewer than 24 other entries throughout the *Dictionary* refer to it (nine of which contain other fragments taken from Cantillon) and because it has 14 cross-references to other entries (eight of which also plagiarised Cantillon). To some extent the relative prominence of entries illustrates the central place of 'mercantile' concerns in Postlethwayt's scheme of thought. That is to say, topics like 'Money', 'Coin', 'Credit' and 'Balance of Trade' were predominant issues in his conception of 'trade'. In this respect Postlethwayt was very much in tune with the wider contemporary British literature. In fact, only the entries 'Circulation' and 'Labour' contained extracts from Cantillon that were not primarily concerned with either monetary issues or foreign trade.⁴⁰

Section 5. Sources associated with Cantillon's Contribution

Having made a selection of 28 entries, our attention now turns to the sources Postlethwayt relied on in these entries. The aim of this exercise is to get an impression of the economic literature of his day that he found most instructive for developing the 'political' perspective on trade. First, however, something needs to be said about Postlethwayt's very uneven citation practice. Since he frequently did not reference his sources, one may unwittingly be reading not just Cantillon (a well-known case of plagiarism), but also other original authors like Vanderlint or Montesquieu (less well-known cases).⁴¹ Postlethwayt was especially adept at the unacknowledged use of extracts that themselves did contain referenced or quoted citations. As a result the reader would be misled into thinking that (s)he was looking at first-hand citations, while they are really second-hand.⁴² Although rife in Postlethwayt's work,

³⁹ Perhaps the most relevant entries left out in this way are 'Parliament', 1385, (with quotations from Uztariz and Child), 'People', 1394, (with quotations from Halley, Maitland, Petty, Davenant, Kerseboom and King) and 'Revenue, national', 1458, (quotations from Bacon, Baker, Burnet, Fleetwood, Folkes, Hollingshead, Davenant/King, Machiavelli, Madox, Petty, Venham and Walker).

⁴⁰ 'Circulation' contains Cantillon's famous account of the role of entrepreneurs in a commercial circular-flow economy. 'Labour' covers a range of topics dealt with by Cantillon such as the origin of property rights, the concept of intrinsic value and the reasons for wage differentials in the economy. Together with the extract in 'Mines', which however deals with monetary matters, these are the only entries with content from what is part I in the French version of Cantillon's work. By confining the material from this part of the *Essay* to two entries only, one may say that Postlethwayt shows a bias towards the more traditional foreign trade concerns of the mercantile literature.

⁴¹ See respectively notes 57 and 61 below.

⁴² Fraser (1938) correctly criticised Johnson (1937) for mistaking some second-hand quotations in the *Dictionary* for first-hand quotations. One gets the impression that Postlethwayt was more prone to not acknowledging his borrowings when such fragments contained *acknowledged* quotations from other sources. This is quite clear in his use of Decker (1744): this source *was* acknowledged when an excerpt did *not* contain

such deceptive practices were not at all uncommon at the time.⁴³ To some extent they were a feature of the accumulative nature of the economic discourse of the time in which originality was less valued than a continued elaboration of the views of earlier authorities. As long as one takes care in identifying the various layers of first and second-hand quotations, one is in fact studying precisely the dissemination and impact of economic ideas beyond their original publication.

If one looks at the sources used in an entry like ‘Money’ then it appears that on this central topic Postlethwayt almost exclusively relied on Cantillon’s work.⁴⁴ The same is true for ‘Banking’, ‘Barter’, ‘Cash’ and ‘Circulation’. But in the other seven entries the fragments from Cantillon occur together with materials taken from other writers who in Postlethwayt’s judgment had written authoritatively on the topics under consideration. In addition, further authorities are quoted in the entries with multiple cross-references to and/or from ones containing fragments from Cantillon. A study of the content of the 28 entries identified allows one to identify the (mostly British) literature with which Postlethwayt, in quite a literal sense, associated Cantillon ideas. Appendix C gives a full list of these sources.

The list provides some fascinating insights into Postlethwayt’s uses of the contemporary economic literature. A number of recurrent names are those of well-known economic writers of the later 17th century, confirming their status as recognised authorities in the 18th century.⁴⁵ These writers include Sir William Petty (1620-1687). Unsurprisingly, Petty’s name figures prominently in the entry ‘Political Arithmetick’, but almost the whole of that entry was in fact taken from Charles Davenant’s essay ‘Of the Use of Political Arithmetick’, which first appeared in the latter’s *Discourses on the Public Revenues, and on the Trade of England*, published in 1698. Petty’s views are also referred to in ‘Landed Interest’, ‘Manure’, ‘Labour’

citations of earlier authors (e.g. in ‘Balance of Trade’, i, 186), while it was *not* acknowledged if such citations *did* occur in the original (e.g. in the entry ‘Labour’, ii, 3-4). This practice complicates matters further insofar that yet other references to Decker that seem first-hand in fact occur in unacknowledged borrowings from other sources. For example, the entry ‘Landed Interest’ (ii, 12-14) quotes, without any acknowledgment, a long passage from *Considerations upon a reduction of the Land-tax* (1749) a work by Robert Craggs, the Earl Nugent, Josiah Tucker’s patron. In this passage taken from Craggs besides the work of Matthew Decker, those of William Wood, Charles King and Charles Davenant are referenced, but since the former source is not mentioned one would not know that all these references are second-hand.

⁴³ I am trying to avoid the question of the ethics of Postlethwayt’s plagiarism. Of course this is an issue that is complicated by the different scholarly standards of the time. Still, Arthur Young’s little barb when mentioning ‘Mr. Postlethwayte [...] usual custom of quoting writers without naming them’ suggests that the latter’s practice was out of the ordinary even in his own time (Young 1772: 287).

⁴⁴ Apart from a short paragraph quoted from Aristotle’s *Politics* chapter 6, explaining the origin of money from the difficulties of multilateral barter (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 282). The fragment taken from Cantillon corresponds in large part with the content of the French *Essai*, part 2, chap. 6. See Cantillon (2015: 262-288).

⁴⁵ In some cases it is perhaps also significant which authors do *not* occur in this sample. For example Sir Josiah Child (1630-1699) does not figure prominently in this selection of entries (though there is one quotation in the entry ‘Parliament’ see n.37 above). Elsewhere in the *Dictionary* Child’s views are quoted at length in the articles ‘Merchant Court’ and ‘Companies’ where he is also described as ‘the ablest advocate of companies’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 548). Perhaps this indicates that Postlethwayt rated Child’s work more as a successful pleader for mercantile interests than as a systematic thinker.

and ‘Cash’.⁴⁶ Charles Davenant (1656-1714) is further quoted in ‘Britain’, ‘Labour’, and ‘Landed Interest’.⁴⁷ The prominence of the views of Petty and Davenant in the *Dictionary* confirms the view of Hoppit (1996) that the interest in political arithmetic had not disappeared by the mid-18th century and indeed went through something of a revival.⁴⁸

The other authority from the late 17th century who is repeatedly quoted in our selection of entries is John Locke (1632-1704), in ‘The British Mercantile College’, ‘Coin’, ‘Credit, public’, ‘Interest’, ‘Labour’, ‘Landed Interest’ and ‘Taxation’.⁴⁹ The fact that Postlethwayt would associate some of the ideas of Petty, Locke and Davenant with those of Cantillon is hardly surprising given the fact that they are explicitly referenced in the latter’s work. In fact, in a few places the *Dictionary* cited Petty and Locke indirectly *through* unacknowledged passages taken from Cantillon.⁵⁰

From the early decades of the 18th century the then more well-known authors cited in the cluster of entries under consideration include Charles King, Erasmus Philips and Sir Matthew Decker. Charles King’s publication *The British Merchant* of 1721, a work very well known in its time as a kind of semi-official publication, featured in five of the entries considered (‘Arbitration’, ‘Balance of Trade’, ‘Britain’, ‘Exchange’ and ‘Landed Interest’).⁵¹

⁴⁶ Petty also features elsewhere in the *Dictionary*, including as noted above (n.37) in ‘People’ and ‘Revenue, National’, but also in ‘Navigation’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 321) and ‘Poor’ (ii, 496). And in the entry ‘Arithmetic’ (i, 106) Postlethwayt gave a brief indication of the principal authorities on the subject of political arithmetic: ‘Those who are esteemed to have wrote upon this subject are Sir William Petty, Dr Davenant, Mr King, Erasmus Philips Esq; and the anonymous author of a tract wrote in French, intituled, *Essai politique sur le commerce*, 12mo, published in 1736 [that is, Jean-François Melon (1675-1738)]’.

⁴⁷ As noted above, Davenant was also quoted in ‘People’, ‘Poor’ and ‘Revenue, National’. It is worth noting the range of Davenant’s works quoted by Postlethwayt. His *Report to the commissioners for publick accounts* (1712) and *Discourses on the public revenues and on the trade of England* (1698) are quoted in ‘Britain’ in relation to estimates of the volumes of foreign trade between Britain and its principal trading partners. ‘People’ quoted his *Essay upon the probable method of making people gainers in the balance of trade* (1699), which itself quoted Gregory King’s estimates, and ‘Poor’ quoted from that same *Essay* the section ‘A Scheme for Setting the Poor to Work’.

⁴⁸ Alimento (2014: 1018-19) point out that the interest in political arithmetic in the 1750s was also in evidence on the continent.

⁴⁹ The ‘incomparable author’, John Locke was clearly amongst Postlethwayt’s favourite authorities not only on matters of money and taxation, but also when it came to the latter’s pet subjects of educational methods and the importance of commercial learning, see besides ‘The British Mercantile College’ also ‘Manufacturer’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 130-1) and ‘Mathematics’ (ii, 179).

⁵⁰ Petty is cited through Cantillon in ‘Cash’ (i, 463) and ‘Labour’ (ii,3); for Locke the citation through Cantillon is in ‘Money’ (ii, 284). Cf. Cantillon (2015: 229, 113 and 284 respectively).

⁵¹ Like his contemporaries, Postlethwayt familiarly referred to ‘the British Merchant’ almost as if it was an institution. Rather than mentioning the name of Charles King, the editor of the 1721 edition in three volumes, he correctly ascribed the collection of articles to ‘those able and distinguished merchants of the city of London, who were instrumental, in conjunction with the late ever memorable Earls of Halifax and Stanhope, in defeating the French treaty of Commerce in the year 1712’ (‘Arbitration’ I, 91). In 1721 Charles King was chamber-keeper to the treasury and the treasury paid for the costs of printing and of the distribution of copies to ‘each of the corporations of the treasury who send members to parliament’. For this reason it has been seen as a semi-official publication representing the economic views of the Walpole government. For a discussion see Johnson (1937).

Postlethwayt clearly thought the accounts of the arbitration in foreign exchanges he found in *The British Merchant* and in Cantillon's manuscript to be compatible. In 'Arbitration' a lengthy exposition of the use of bills of exchange taken from *The British Merchant* (King 1721, iii, p.97ff)⁵² is followed by the comment 'the foregoing reasoning may be further carried thus', after which a short fragment borrowed from Cantillon is included. Conversely, in the entry 'Balance of Trade' a lengthy fragment taken from Cantillon is directly followed by the remark that the foregoing exposition is in accordance with 'the sentiments of those eminent merchants of London, who had a share in writing of the *British Merchant*, against the treaty of commerce made with France at Utrecht (see the article Arbitration of Exchanges)' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 186).⁵³

Similarly, in the entry 'Britain' cross-references to 'Balance of Trade', 'Money' and 'Coin' (as well as to 'Exchange' and 'Par of Exchange') are immediately followed by an (unacknowledged) lengthy excerpt from *The British Merchant* (King 1721, i, 21ff) that purports to explain that 'the nature of trades with particular countries varies, nor are all alike beneficial'.⁵⁴ Finally, the entry 'Landed Interest', which has cross-references to 'Coin', 'Labour' and 'Money', quotes estimates from *The British Merchant* about the size of domestic expenditure of Britain (£44m) together with the size of annual incomes of landowners (£14m). This estimate in a way corroborates what Cantillon had called a 'general opinion in England' namely the view that land rents constitute one third of total expenditures.⁵⁵

⁵² This exposition from *The British Merchant* was noted more frequently at the time. For example, Joseph Harris (1757: 109-10), in a work that also unwittingly plagiarized Cantillon through Postlethwayt's *Dictionary* (see Cantillon 2015: 34-5), borrowed the same passage from *The British Merchant* that figured in 'Arbitration'. In this case Harris's acknowledged quotation was apparently a direct one. By contrast Cunningham (1761: 497) came by the same passage from *The British Merchant* in an indirect way, by plagiarizing the first part of Postlethwayt's entry 'Arbitration' including the short fragment from Cantillon. Even McCulloch (1833: 18) still used the exposition from *The British Merchant*.

⁵³ The long fragment from Cantillon in 'Balance of Trade' corresponds to the first three chapters of part three of the French *Essai*. It includes the shorter excerpt also used in 'Arbitration'. Earlier Postlethwayt had already plagiarized most of the chapters he was to use for 'Balance of Trade' in his prospectus or 'Plan' for the *Dictionary* of 1749.

⁵⁴ It is a little hard to judge whether Postlethwayt is here quoting directly from the *British Merchant* or indirectly from William Wood's *Survey of Trade* (quoted elsewhere in the *Dictionary*, cf. n.58) who included nearly the same passages from the *British Merchant*, without acknowledgment (Wood 1718: 81ff). In any case the passage in question develops reasoning that is not dissimilar to Cantillon's view (2015: 366 [D503]) that 'we may examine the advantages, or disadvantages of every particular branch of trade with any foreign country'.

⁵⁵ The difficulty with Cantillon's statement in the *Essai* (II.iii.1), also quoted by Postlethwayt in the entry 'Cash', is that he does not give a more specific indication of the authors who had expressed this 'general opinion', see Cantillon (2015: 213). Postlethwayt's collation of views is in fact quite enlightening in this respect and at the same time forms a typical example of Postlethwayt's slippery citation practice. The passage from the *British Merchant* cited in 'Landed Interest' is actually an indirect quotation occurring within a long excerpt taken, without acknowledgment, from Robert Craggs, the Earl Nugent (1749). The pages 17 to 26, which Postlethwayt lifted from this work, with some small omissions, are reproduced from the last paragraph on page 12 to the top of page 14 in vol. 2 of the *Dictionary* and include other indirect citations from Matthew Decker, William Wood and Charles Davenant. At the beginning of the Craggs fragment it is stated that Petty had calculated the national expenditure at £49m and that the *British Merchant* had estimated that £5m was spent on foreign goods, leaving £44m for domestic expenditure.

Passages from ‘the late’ Sir Matthew Decker’s *Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade* (1744) are quoted alongside fragments from Cantillon in the entries ‘Balance of Trade’, ‘Coin’, ‘Labour’ and ‘Landed Interest’ mostly supplementing the latter’s views with observations about the effects of taxes, a topic about which Cantillon had been largely silent.⁵⁶

An author of uncertain renown in his time, but noted much later for his apparent free trade views, was Jacob Vanderlint (?-1740). A very long extract of his *Money Answers All Things* of 1734 was included without any acknowledgment in the entry ‘Manure’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 139-145). That Postlethwayt associated Vanderlint’s views with those of Cantillon is clear not only from the repeated cross-references with which he punctuated the former’s text (to ‘Balance of Trade’, ‘Cash’, ‘Circulation’ and ‘Money’), but especially from a remark immediately preceding the excerpt plagiarised from Vanderlint:

it may be proper to lay down and illustrate some principles relating to money, which may deserve to be regarded as maxims perhaps. This, indeed, I intended to have done under the article Money; but, considering that [...] I should have matter of a different kind to come under the head of Money [as noted, Cantillon’s manuscript was the sole source providing Postlethwayt with this ‘matter’]; I judge upon the whole, it will be best to come in here (ibid. 139).⁵⁷

A very similar thing occurred in the entry ‘Bullion’, or more precisely in the subsection entitled ‘Political Remarks upon Bullion’. This subsection was largely based on a long excerpt borrowed without acknowledgment from William Wood’s *A Survey of Trade*

⁵⁶ Interestingly, the financier and merchant Sir Matthew Decker (1679-1749) had been a personal acquaintance of Cantillon (see Murphy 1986: 51-2), but of course the fact that Postlethwayt was to combine several of their views in the *Dictionary* entries mentioned here does not imply that either writer influenced the other in a direct manner. In *Great Britain’s True System* Postlethwayt repeated his combined use of fragments from Cantillon and Decker (see Postlethwayt 1757a: 148ff). Decker was also quoted in a number of other *Dictionary* entries including ‘Bonding’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 306-7), ‘Funds’ (i, 877, 881-3), ‘Ireland’ (i, 1003) and ‘Smuggling’ (ii, 740-1). Apparently, only in ‘Balance of Trade’ and ‘Landed Interest’ Postlethwayt acknowledged his source. As a result, for example, references in ‘Labour’ to Locke, Davenant and issue number 200 of the *Spectator* (a contribution by Henry Martyn [1665-1721]) are in fact indirect citations that occur in an unacknowledged fragment (the pages 16-22) taken from Decker (1744).

⁵⁷ Presumably, Henry Higgs was misled by the similarity of some views of Vanderlint, surreptitiously reproduced in ‘Manure’, to those of Cantillon when he claimed that this entry contained some of the latter’s writings (see Cantillon 1931, 390 App. A). Bizarrely, Postlethwayt also offered an ill-tempered defence of his odd decision to include a section on monetary theory in an entry on manure: ‘The head I am upon [‘Manure’], indeed, may be judged, by some hyper-critic, not so properly adapted to the consideration I am about to enter upon; to which I shall only observe, that my work will not admit me to confine myself to the mere trammels and shackles of a dictionary-monger: I shall, on the contrary, take such latitude as the plan of my work requires’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 139).

(1718).⁵⁸ It presented a cogent anti-bullionist argument that was rather similar to what is found in Cantillon.⁵⁹ In Wood's somewhat altered words:

There has not been any capital article of traffic more generally misunderstood, perhaps, than what relates to gold and silver, or bullion, which some would have not to be reckoned a commodity, or merchandize, and therefore, not permitted to go out, when once brought into the kingdom. But those who seem to have thought the clearest and deepest upon this matter, have been of a different sentiment; and in judging bullion gold or silver to be merchandize, have contended for it's free exportation, as well as importation (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 397-8, cf. Wood 1718: 331-2).

Again, just after the borrowing from Wood concludes, Postlethwayt signalled:

There would be little difficulty to corroborate this reasoning with a train of weighty arguments, and to confirm the same from the concurring sentiments of the ablest statesmen; but the letter B swelling to a length beyond the proportioned design, I shall refer the other matter to such heads as have congruity with this topic; such as the articles of Coin, Gold, Silver, Money, National Debts, &c (ibid. 399).

'Coin' and 'Money' being in effect references to like fragments taken from Cantillon (and 'Balance of Trade' and 'Coin' in their turn containing cross-references to 'Bullion') the association between the contributions is clear.

What Postlethwayt's collation of the views of writers like Vanderlint and Wood -but also those of Decker, the *British Merchant* and older authorities and yet other lesser-known authors-⁶⁰ shows is that he tended to select passages from mercantile authors that displayed a more liberal and theoretical bent of mind. This is further underscored by his borrowings from what has sometimes been considered a new generation of authors, like Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Hume (1711-1776). The former's *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748) is quoted at length, again without any acknowledgment, in the entry 'Exchange' under the typical heading 'Of exchange in a political light' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 741-3).⁶¹ What is more, this is followed by a long quotation, this time acknowledged, from another 'very ingenious French author', Nicolas Dutot (1684-1741), whose views in his *Réflexions politiques* (1738) are favourably

⁵⁸ This William Wood (there appear to have been several in the period) identified himself as 'secretary to the customs'. With information from the *Annual Register* (1766, vol. 8, p.170) this suggests that he lived from 1679 until 25 February 1765. Other editions of his *Survey* were published in 1719 and 1722, possibly attesting to its temporary success. The chapter that was lifted nearly verbatim by Postlethwayt has the title 'Some Considerations on the Exportation of Gold and Silver etc.' (Wood 1718: 331-338). Postlethwayt again used almost the same excerpt in *British Commercial Interest* (1757 vol 2, pp.253ff).

⁵⁹ The argument is closest to what is presented in chapter 3 of part 3 in the French *Essai*, or the similar account reproduced in the *Dictionary* in 'Balance of Trade'. See especially the paragraphs reproduced in Cantillon 2015: 410-12 [D564, 67 and 69].

⁶⁰ To give just one more example, in the entry 'England' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 713) Postlethwayt reproduced most of chapter XV of from John Campbell's *The Present State of Europe* (1750), which eloquently advocated more liberal and mutually beneficial trade relations with France.

⁶¹ To be precise, the whole of chapter 10 'Of Exchange' (book xxii of the *Spirit of the Laws*) is plagiarised. This includes Montesquieu's discussion of Law's system. It appears that Postlethwayt used the English translation of *De l'Esprit* by Thomas Nugent published in 1750, because it follows this version very closely.

compared to those of his countryman Melon.⁶² This entry is connected to other entries in the *Dictionary* that contain fragments from Cantillon by no fewer than 11 ‘to’ and ‘from’ cross-references, thereby in a sense associating his work not only with the contemporary English literature but also to the French.⁶³

A final source to highlight is David Hume’s essay ‘Of Public Credit’, which is quoted at length in three entries (‘Credit, Public’, ‘Debt, National’ and ‘Paper Credit’), each of which have multiple cross-references to entries containing fragments from Cantillon (see Appendix B).⁶⁴ One thing to note is the speed with which Postlethwayt assimilated this contribution into his *Dictionary*: Hume’s *Political Discourses*, which included ‘Of Public Credit’, was published in England in the first week of March 1752, hence when the weekly instalments of the *Dictionary* had already started to appear. Within eight months, that is, first in issue 49 which appeared by the end of October 1752, Postlethwayt started quoting Hume’s essay.⁶⁵ Another thing to note is that, Postlethwayt felt it necessary to comment on the pessimistic tenor of Hume’s views about the sustainability of the public debt. At the end of a long excerpt from the Scotsman’s essay in the entry ‘Debt, National’ he writes:

⁶² Postlethwayt used the English translation of Dutot’s work *Political reflections upon the finances and commerce of France*, published in 1739. Pages 147 to 164 of that translation, including tables, are reproduced nearly verbatim. Postlethwayt then observes that the French author of the *Essai Politique sur le Commerce* [i.e., Melon] ‘will hardly be taken for a weak man. His tract is wrote with a great deal of spirit and lively eloquence, which makes it the more dangerous, because several of it’s maxims are false, and of universal bad tendency. The writer before quoted [*i.e.* Dutot], therefore, thought proper to guard his countrymen against the pernicious influence of some of it’s principles, especially those relating to money’. He also notes that ‘from the general strain of his reasoning, it appears, what good use [Dutot] has made of some of the best of our writers, upon the same subject [mainly of changing denominations of coins], particularly of Mun and Locke, if not of Vaughan and King, &c. he often citing the authority of the two former’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 748, based loosely on the translator’s preface in Dutot 1739: iv-v).

⁶³ See Larrère (2011) for a good discussion of similarities between the economics of Cantillon and Montesquieu, which also includes a perhaps not equally convincing suggestion that the former influenced the latter directly (cf. Cantillon 2015:14). This paper focussing mainly on British sources, it does not allow a full development of the point that Postlethwayt’s possessed a remarkable knowledge of the French economic literature. Apart from the fact that he retained a portion of Savary’s *Dictionnaire*, Postlethwayt’s additions contained various later French works. The catalogue containing Postlethwayt’s library has over 40 French economic titles, somewhat widely defined (see van den Berg 2017). The fact that Auxiron’s *Principes de tout gouvernement* (1766) is listed, a rarity in Britain at the time, suggests that Postlethwayt kept collecting right up to his death in 1767.

⁶⁴ He quoted ‘Of Public Credit’ again at some length in Postlethwayt (1757a: 213-17). He apparently did not use any other essays from Hume’s *Political Discourses*.

⁶⁵ See the advert for the publication of issue 49 in the *London Evening Post*, 26-28 October 1752. The rapid inclusion of Hume is not an exception. See for example n.16 above. To give another example, in the entry ‘Britain’ Postlethwayt wrote ‘since what I have wrote on this topic in the former part of the work [‘Arbitration’, ‘Balance of Trade’], there has appeared a very ingenious Italian writer [...] The author I mean is the celebrated Signior Mercheze Girolamo Belloni, merchant and banker at Rome [and] his treatise De Commercio’. (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 358). Issue 16 of the *Dictionary*, which contained the entry ‘Balance of Trade’, was published at the end of February 1752. ‘Britain’ was contained in issue 29, which appeared by the end of May the same year. For this reason it is likely that the publication of Belloni’s book he referred to was actually the English translation of 1752 and not the original, written in Latin and Italian, of 1750. Thus Postlethwayt started including excerpts from this English translation almost immediately when he got his hands on it. Borrowing from Belloni’s work was especially extensive in the entry ‘Coin’. Postlethwayt copied the whole of chapter IV (Belloni 1752: 39-62; Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 529-31) though, as usual, not wholly *verbatim*.

According to the judgment of this gentleman [*i.e.*, Hume], we find he entertains but a very melancholy idea of the state of the monied interest, and the instability of the public credit of this kingdom. However, we cannot help thinking but this learned writer hath carried his imagination rather too far, it having been shewn, under the article of PUBLIC CREDIT, that such is the efficacious operation of a permanent sinking fund, that we need not be under such terrible apprehensions [...] the monied interest have no reason to consider themselves in a state of desperation, as the learned author before quoted seems to do (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 631).

Such a critical comment on a ‘learned author’ was something of an exception for Postlethwayt, who generally was much more intent on knitting together a kind of consensus view of earlier authors and presenting this collation as the received wisdom on ‘political’ aspects of commerce.

Section 6. Conclusion

The selection and classification of past economic literature is rarely a neutral taxonomic exercise. Instead, such efforts are normally driven by specific economic theoretical preconceptions and preferences. This paper examined Malachy Postlethwayt’s ample effort of selection and classification of the rapidly expanding economic literature of his own time in his *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. Postlethwayt certainly fulfilled his promise that there would be an ‘immense fund of facts and materials contained in the Dictionary’ (Postlethwayt 1749: 26). A full listing of Postlethwayt’s sources would be a considerable task. Of course, even such a full listing would merely represent the selection made by a single compiler, however ‘judicious and industrious’ he may have been. Therefore it would be wrong to make any strong claims as to the representativeness of Postlethwayt’s picking of authorities from the contemporary economic literature.

Nevertheless, one may say that Postlethwayt’s choice of sources for a selection of entries that were central to his *Dictionary* is an interesting case in the context of fundamental changes that were afoot in economic thinking in the third quarter of the 18th century. In order to make this case this paper first examined Postlethwayt’s overall, implicit, ordering of a wide array of topics that, in his mind, constituted the spacious subject of ‘trade’. This ordering was represented as a single network mapping (in Appendix A), based on the many cross-references in the *Dictionary*. Next in section 4 from this overall mapping a selection of a mere 28 entries was made. It was claimed that the contents of this small group of entries reveal some interesting aspects of Postlethwayt’s theoretical preconceptions and preferences.

First, as we saw, for Postlethwayt the distinction between the ‘practical’ and ‘political’ perspectives on ‘trade’ was fundamental for classifying different kinds of economic knowledge. The 28 entries selected comprised some of the most central topics of his ‘political’ perspective. Second, as regards to the sources used in these entries, there were a number of earlier, mostly British authors, like Locke, Davenant, Charles King, and Decker (besides others identified in Appendix C) whom Postlethwayt regarded as the main economic authorities prior to the mid-century. A unique aspect of Postlethwayt’s collation is that in

linking the ideas of such authorities, Richard Cantillon's work played a central role, not only supplying the former with fundamental fragments of the *content* for the *Dictionary*, but also by shaping part of its *structure* (as expressed in cross-references). Even though Postlethwayt hardly made the best possible use of the novel structure suggested in Cantillon's *Essay*, it is fascinating to see which other authors he associated with the latter's contribution.

To appreciate how Postlethwayt's effort related to the changes in economic discourse in the years immediately after its completion it is instructive to look in conclusion at some French responses to the *Dictionary*. As noted, contemporaries saw Postlethwayt's addition of 'political' entries as a novel feature of his *Dictionary* when compared to the famous *Dictionnaire* of Savary. Interestingly, in France some initiatives appear to have been undertaken to follow up the suggestion in the *Journal œconomique* to adopt Postlethwayt's additions in future dictionaries of commerce (see above p.6). In a letter dated 19 June 1757, recently highlighted by Sabbagh (2016: 29), Gournay recommended a plan that was based on 'the idea of the society [of Brittany] to translate articles added by Postlewaith [sic] to the Dictionary of Commerce'.⁶⁶ It was most probably this same aborted initiative that André Morellet (1727-1819) was referring to a decade later in the *Prospectus* for his own *Nouveau Dictionnaire du Commerce*: he noted that it had been the original plan to produce 'a new edition of Savary, [...] by joining to the latest editions, the translation of what Mr. Postlethwayt had added to the French dictionary' (Morellet 1769: 21).⁶⁷

Morellet's attitude towards Postlethwayt's *Dictionary* reveals a critical perspective inspired by what was by then known as the 'new science' of political economy. When he took over the project of producing a new edition of the *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* in 1762, Morellet soon decided against simply translating Postlethwayt's additions and instead decided to make a completely new dictionary in five volumes. Only the *Prospectus* for this new dictionary was eventually published, in May 1769, but this *Prospectus* contained some pertinent critical reflections on Postlethwayt's efforts.

It was true, Morellet acknowledged, that Postlethwayt had added 'a small number of articles that could be regarded as belonging to the *general Theory of Commerce (Théorie générale du Commerce)*', something about which 'Savary had not said a word' (ibid. 22, 323; cf.18). Without expressly stating which entries in Postlethwayt he was referring to, Morellet listed the following *articles généraux* he found lacking in Savary: 'Agriculture, Manufactures, Freedom of Trade, Companies, Guilds, Patents, Navigation, Credit, Paper Credit, Circulation,

⁶⁶ This covering letter from Gournay to Malesherbes is item 34 in manuscript fr 22131 of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. It precedes a plan for a new dictionary by the secretary of the *Société d'Agriculture de Commerce & des Arts of Brittany* Louis-Paul Abeille (1717-1807). Morellet (1769: 21) is probably also referring to Abeille when recounting that 'an esteemed and diligent *homme de lettres* had started working of this plan, but soon realized the inconvenience and insufficiency of the enterprise'.

⁶⁷ Morellet's acquaintance with Gournay dated from the mid-1750s when his friend Turgot introduced him to the magistrate (Morellet 1821: 37). This connection is likely to have played a role in the decision to put Morellet in charge of the project once Abeille had given it up. After Gournay's death in 1759, Morellet had been given access to the magistrate's collection of official papers and reports, which he intended to use as sources for his *Dictionnaire* (Morellet 1769: 356).

Wealth, Luxury, Population, Colonies, &c.’ (*ibid.* 19). Most of these *had* been entries in the English work.⁶⁸ However, Morellet had some significant objections against Postlethwayt’s treatment of such subjects.

First, for Morellet several of the sources on which Postlethwayt had relied were becoming out-dated. As a connoisseur of the *science nouvelle* of political economy, Morellet intended to draw on ‘that part of human knowledge that, *since the middle of the century*, has more frequently become an object of the speculation of Philosophers, and the subject of a large number of writings’ (*ibid.* 9, emphasis added).⁶⁹ The new economic literature he was referring to can be identified from the *Catalogue d’une bibliothèque d’économie politique*, which Morellet joined to his *Prospectus*. This catalogue classified 740 works under various headings and provides an interesting overview of the scope of the economic literature by the end of the 1760s. Most of the ‘political’ literature of trade was classed under not one but two separate headings. Many of the 61 works that Morellet listed under the heading *Du Commerce en Général* had been used in Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* too, especially the 27 titles published before the mid-century, 70% of which were English.⁷⁰ The heading *commerce en général* was of course reminiscent of the French title of Cantillon’s work and this is unlikely to have been an accident: Morellet knew this work very well and valued it highly.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Only entries for ‘Wealth’ and ‘Luxury’ did not occur in Postlethwayt’s work. Morellet’s mention of the entry ‘Circulation’ is interesting. He mistakenly noted the presence of an entry on ‘Circulation’ in the Copenhagen edition of Savary’s *Dictionnaire* of 1759-65, and may have been confusing it with Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* (Morellet 1769: 20). The latter dictionary was in fact unique in this period for having an entry for ‘Circulation’ with an economic content (if one disregards the dictionary of Mortimer, whose entry on ‘Circulation’ was plagiarized from Postlethwayt [see Cantillon 2015: 239]). Entries with this title in other works of reference, including Chambers *Cyclopaedia* and the *Encyclopédie*, were invariably concerned with circular processes in human and animal physiology or with hydrology. As indicated above, Postlethwayt’s entry ‘Circulation’ (as well as ‘Cash’) was entirely based on Cantillon’s seminal account of circular flow.

⁶⁹ Adam Smith referred to Morellet as ‘[a]n eminent French author, of great knowledge in matters of political œconomy’ (Smith [1776] 1976: 755). Smith will have been familiar with the catalogue through the copy of the *Prospectus* Morellet had sent him through the intermediation of Hume (Mizuta 2000: 176).

⁷⁰ 19 out of 27 works published before 1750 were in English. Of these one was a translation of an original French work, that is, *A Political Essay on Commerce*, a translation from 1739 of Melon’s *Essai politique sur le Commerce* (1736). On the other hand, one French work, was a translation published in 1720 of John Law’s writings and the sole Italian work was a translation of John Locke’s economic writings. The opposite conclusion can be drawn for the 34 works under this heading that had been published since 1750: 70% (23 out of 34) were French publications. These, however, included a number of, mostly free, translations from English works by members of the Gournay Circle. As noted, much of this wave of new French economic publications came too late for Postlethwayt to be able to incorporate them in his *Dictionary*. However, some of the other works listed by Morellet, like Uztariz’s *Théorie & pratique du Commerce & de la Marine* (translated into French from Spanish in 1753), Belloni’s *Dissertation sur le Commerce* (translated into French from Italian in 1756), and of course Cantillon’s *Essai sur la nature du Commerce en général* (published in French in 1755) had been available to Postlethwayt in English. By the way, Morellet also listed one work by Postlethwayt under the heading of *commerce en général*, namely his *Great Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved* (the 1759 edition). Elsewhere in the *Catalogue* he also listed Postlethwayt (1750), (1751-5) and (1757a).

⁷¹ Around the time of the publication of the *Essai*, Gournay had directed young *abbé*’s reading to the English economic literature and to Cantillon (see Salvat 2000). Evidence of Morellet’s detailed knowledge of the *Essai* can be found in several of his surviving manuscripts (see van den Berg 1998: 183-4, 229). What is more, in an interesting sketch of the history of the new science of political economy in France, written in 1764, but not published until 1775, Morellet gave a prominent role to Cantillon’s work, arguing that ‘from around 1750 [sic.] the signal for this study [of political economy] amongst us was given by the edition of the excellent *Essai sur le*

However, it is likely that by the end of the 1760s he felt Cantillon's theories had been superseded by a set of newer economic ideas.

This is suggested by the presence in Morellet's catalogue of 30 works listed under another heading, *Traité généraux et mélanges d'Economie politique*, most of which had been unknown to Postlethwayt.⁷² All but two had been published since 1750 and 25 since 1755, the year in which Postlethwayt had completed his *Dictionary*. Amongst the newer books the physiocrats were strongly represented, with publications such as Quesnay's *Tableau économique* (1758), Mirabeau and Quesnay's *Philosophie rurale* (1763) and Mercier de la Rivière's *L'ordre naturel & essentiel des Sociétés politiques* (1767). Morellet cannot be considered a conventional physiocrat, having been influenced by Gournay as well as Quesnay, and he undoubtedly intended to draw upon a very wide range of materials for his *Dictionnaire*. Nevertheless, the fact that he made a distinction between a literature dealing with *commerce en général* and one dealing with *économie politique* reflected Morellet's view that a new kind of political economic literature had emerged, a body of work that had not been available to Postlethwayt.

Second, within this new literature there was a shift both in the central content and the method of economic reasoning, both of which were at odds with Postlethwayt's conceptions. With regards to the shifting content, Morellet offered a sketch of the *vocabulaire* of the *théorie générale du commerce & ses opérations* he intended to use, promising, amongst many others, physiocracy-inspired entries on 'Richesses, Avances, Capital, Produit, Luxe, Fonds, &c.' (Morellet 1769: 324-52, 339). Such entries suggested a shift towards the analysis of processes of reproduction and economic growth as the focus of attention of political economy, as can be found in the works of Quesnay, Turgot and Smith. Connected with this shift were changes in the perceived proper method of economic reasoning. As we saw, even though Postlethwayt had insisted in his *Dictionary* on a distinction between the 'practical' and 'political' dimensions to economic knowledge, for him this did not imply that the latter could be obtained without a thorough understanding of the former. On the contrary, Postlethwayt's ideal statesman was in the possession of detailed and expert mercantile knowledge. As he stated in the introduction to his *Dictionary*:

[...] *practical* trade, and its long experienced arts [should be made] the great foundation of all *political* ratiocination upon this subject; for we look upon those practical arts and accomplishments of the experienced and skilful trader, to be as certain a guide, if judiciously and impartially applied to commercial national policy, as true experiments are to philosophy: without the one, the senator and

Commerce en général by Mr. Cantillon, the translations of some English works, like that of Child by the late Mr. de Gournay, and some other works written and published at the prompting of that respectable magistrate' (Morellet 1775: 9-10). Given Morellet's familiarity with the content of the French *Essai* and his statement that he had 'attentively read' Postlethwayt's work (Morellet 1769: 21) one would have expected him to have recognized the latter's surreptitious use of Cantillon, for example in the entry 'Circulation' (cf. n.68). But Morellet remained silent on this matter.

⁷² The only works listed under this heading from which Postlethwayt had quoted in his *Dictionary* were Hume's *Political Discourses* (above n. 65) and Petty's *Several Essays in Political Arithmetick*, of which Morellet noted a reprint of 1755.

statesman will make as mean a figure in commercial policy, as the speculative theorists will in philosophy; the reasoning of both can only be conjectural, and tend rather to puzzle and distract mankind with declamation and chimera, than with any thing truly solid and useful. Hence it is, that *the skilful and judicious merchant*, when he unites a proper knowledge of commercial national politics, and makes a right use thereof, with his experience in trade, *may make a superior figure in the affairs of commerce, in the senate, and any other public capacity*, than others, who have not this practical knowledge for their guide (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i,vii; emphases added).

Consistent with this Postlethwayt had presented both kinds of economic knowledge side by side in his *Dictionary*.⁷³ It was precisely this decision that, according to Morellet, was mostly responsible for the ‘lack of clarity, coherence and regularity throughout’ Postlethwayt’s work (Morellet 1769: 21). Instead, the *articles généraux* should be distinguished much more rigorously from other materials and for that reason, Morellet announced, his own *Dictionnaire* would deal with the ‘general Theory of Commerce’ in an entirely separate volume of the work (see *ibid.* 31).

The radical overhaul of the structure of the *Dictionnaire* that Morellet believed to be necessary reflected something more fundamental, namely his conviction that the ‘*Théorie du Commerce en général*’ was an abstract science in a literal sense. He favoured an approach to ‘the science of political economy’ that ‘enquires into the nature of commerce in general’ by ‘raising itself above’ [*s’élevant au-dessus*] local facts and by studying ‘in broad outlines abstracting from [*abstraction faite de*] all details’.⁷⁴ The attainment of this kind of theoretical economic knowledge, in Morellet’s opinion, required intellectual capacities ‘that are more commonly found in the man of letters than in the merchant’ (*ibid.* 375). First, it required an aptitude for systematic reasoning, or ‘[...] a rigorous logic, a great habit for reflection, reasoning and analysing’. Second, it required impartiality, or a ‘distancing from the limitations of one’s station and from all prejudices of routines’, something more likely to be found in a man of letters ‘who raises himself above usage and opinion’.⁷⁵

⁷³ As pointed out in n.28, Postlethwayt’s practice of frequently dealing with ‘practical’ and ‘political’ aspects of economic topics in the same entries, although sometimes arranged under different subheadings, has as a result that the distinction is not so clear-cut in the mapping of themes. It may be argued that, rather than being a limitation of the mapping exercise, it reflects something real, namely the extent to which Postlethwayt felt both perspectives needed to be considered together.

⁷⁴ ‘We distinguish between two types of knowledge [*sortes de connoissances*] that together can be regarded as forming the totality of the science of Commerce; one that has as its object facts that are local and relative to such and such a particular State, and the other more general [type of knowledge], that does not suppose this relation [...] by the Theory of Commerce in general [*la Théorie du Commerce en général*] we understand the part of the science of political economy that rises above local facts and even above the operations of Commerce that are common to all countries, [it is] the study of the nature of Trade in general [*la nature du Commerce en général*]; studied at large, and abstracting from all details, the sources, materials, laws, means and effects of commerce; [a study] that moves from causes to effects and tries to relate effects back to causes; that attempts to determine what are the best laws for directing commerce towards the greatest happiness of societies [...] (Morellet 1769, pp.324-6).

⁷⁵ This did not mean that it would be *impossible* for a merchant to attain this kind of knowledge: ‘In fact, the knowledge he [the Merchant] will have of a multitude of *facts*, relative to the State in which he lives and to the ones with which he has contacts, and [the knowledge] of the operations of trade that are common to all countries, if they are joined to a good head [*un esprit droit*] and accustomed to attention, will make it easy for

This did not mean, of course, that political economy was an abstract science in the sense of being an academic discipline divorced from application. Morellet did not disagree with Postlethwayt's view that the study of 'trade in a political light' was most immediately of interest to 'the senator and the private gentleman'.⁷⁶ Political economy, as Adam Smith would soon put it much more famously, remained 'the science of a statesman or legislator' (Smith [1776] 1976, I, 428). What had changed, however, were not only the authorities to be referenced (the philosophical economists of the 'new science') and the topics to focus on, but also the very way of coping with the abundance of economic facts. The new economic knowledge of the statesman did not consist in mastery of accumulated facts and of expertise that needed to be calibrated for each and every different branch of 'trade'. Instead, unlike what Postlethwayt had imagined, it consisted in the understanding and application of simple general principles that could be determined by philosophical economists by means of abstraction.

him to rise to the most general and abstract theory: but the latter is not necessary for the conduct of the most extensive trade' (Morellet 1769: 327). This is reminiscent of Turgot's description of Gournay's intellectual development in his 'Eloge de Gournay' (Turgot 1759).

⁷⁶ '[I]f the Dictionary of Trade may have some utility', Morellet proffered 'then it has this above all to persons occupied in the management of the commercial interests of nations' [*personnes occupées à ménager les interest du Commerce des nations*] (Morellet 1769: 369).

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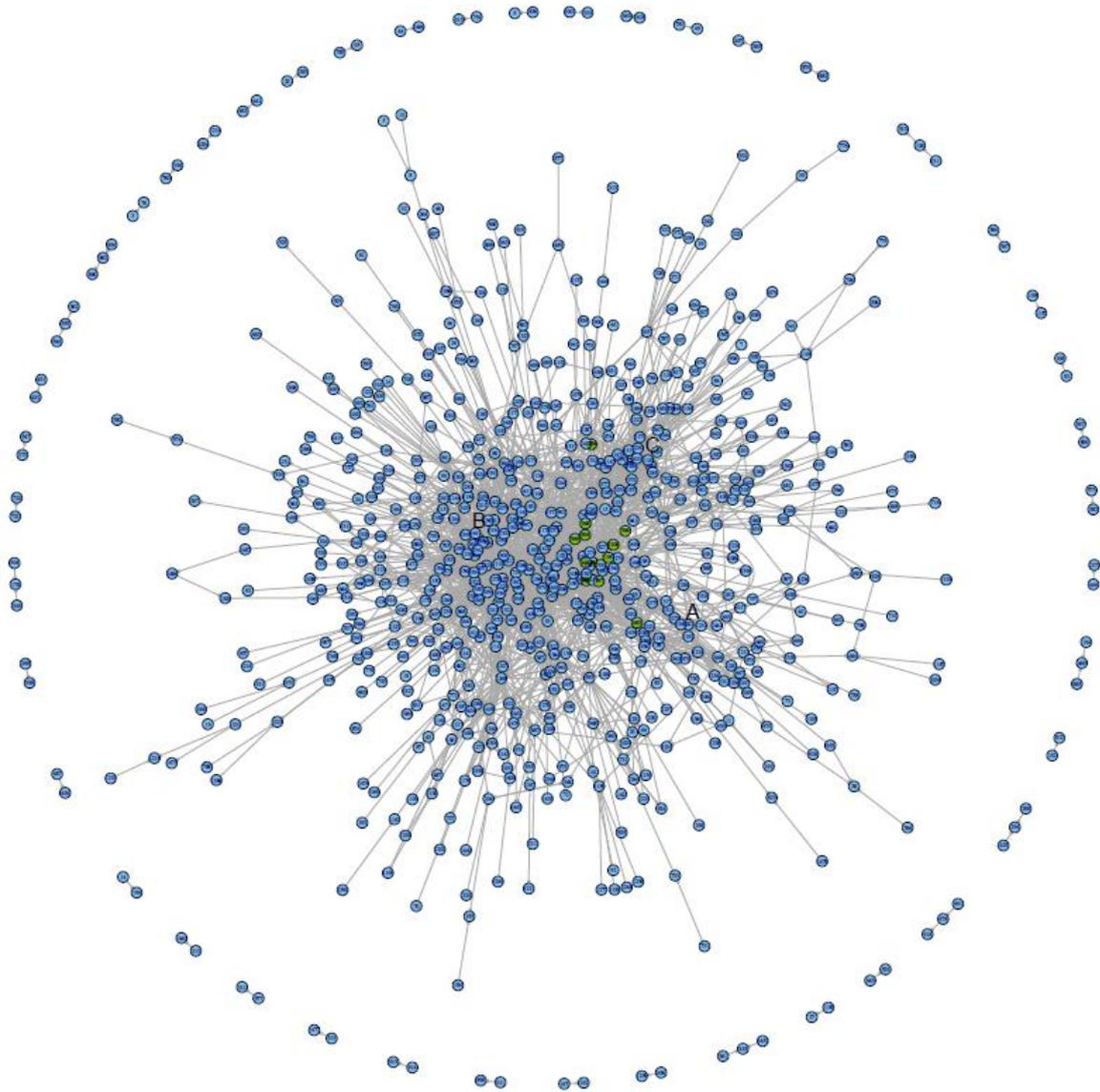
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Appendix A – A Mapping of the cross-references in Postlethway's *Dictionary*



Appendix B

Entries in figure 1 other than ones containing fragments taken from Cantillon. Sources quoted in the highlighted entries are included in Appendix C.

ID		Number of Cross- references <i>From</i> Entries with Fragments from Cantillon	Number of Cross- references <i>To</i> Entries with Fragments from Cantillon	Total
60	Adit	0	1	1
89	Africa	1	0	1
256	Anonymous	1	0	1
359	Artificer	1	0	1
374	Asphaltum	1	0	1
379	Assay	1	0	1
593	Bill	1	2	3
626	Blanching	0	1	1
631	Blasting	0	1	1
663	Bonding	0	1	1
668	Bookkeeping	1	0	1
724	Britain	2	3	5
726	British America	1	0	1
736	Bubble	0	1	1
747	Bullion	2	2	4
763	Cabidos	0	1	1
773	Cafreria	0	1	1
970	Companies	0	1	1
992	Currency	1	1	2
1020	Debt	3	1	4
1040	Discount	0	1	1
1048	Drawbacks	0	1	1
1062	Duties	2	1	3
1066	East-India Company	0	1	1
1077	England	0	5	5
1571	Europe	0	4	4
1081	Exchange	5	6	11
1084	Exportation	0	1	1
1088	Fees	1	0	1
1118	Funds	2	1	3
1127	Genoa	0	2	2
1135	Gold	1	0	1
1169	Holland	0	2	2
1173	Hungary	0	1	1
1188	Insurance	0	1	1
1189	Interest (practical)	1	1	2
1211	Landed Interest	0	4	4
1226	Leather Breeches Maker	0	1	1
1232	Ledger	0	1	1
1244	Linnen	0	1	1

1258	Machine	0	1	1
1263	Manure	0	5	5
1274	Measures and Weights of England	0	1	1
1284	Merc. Acc'ship	1	2	3
1285	[British] Mercantile College	0	6	6
1289	Metallurgy	1	1	2
1290	Metals	1	0	1
1293	Minerology	1	0	1
1296	Mississippi	0	1	1
1302	Monied Interest	0	1	1
1306	Monopolies	1	1	2
1317	National Accountantship	0	1	1
1365	Ores	0	1	1
1380	Paper Credit	0	5	5
1381	Par	0	3	3
1385	Parliament	0	3	3
1394	People	0	2	2
1415	Political Arithmetic	0	6	6
1422	Portugal	0	3	3
1436	Projector	0	2	2
1456	Remittance	2	2	4
1458	Revenue, Public	0	2	2
1467	Royal Exchange	0	1	1
1501	Siam	0	5	5
1506	Silver	3	7	10
1512	Smelting	0	1	1
1515	Smuggling	0	2	2
1525	Stock-Jobbing	0	2	2
1532	Sweden	0	1	1
1536	Taxation	1	3	4
1541	Trade	0	5	5

Appendix C Sources of a Selection of Entries in Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*

(Information in square brackets is not provided by Postlethwayt. Since the manuscript of Cantillon's work used by Postlethwayt is not known, references are to paragraphs in Cantillon 2015)

[King, Charles]	The British Merchant [1721]	Arbitration	I, 91
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D541-D549]	Arbitration	I, 92
Postlethwayt, Malachy	The Merchant's Public Counting-house [1750]	Arbitration	I, 96
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D490-D558]	Balance of Trade	I, 184-6
['Castaing, John']	Castaing's paper of Feb 3, 1740	Balance of Trade	I, 186
Decker, Matthew	An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade [1744]	Balance of Trade	I, 186
[King, Charles]	The British Merchant. 1721	Balance of Trade	I, 186
Mun, Thomas	[England's Treasure by Forraign Trade. 1664]	Balance of Trade	I, 186
[Petyt, William]	Britannia Languens [1680]	Balance of Trade	I, 189
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D628-D655]	Banking	I, 195-6
[Legal statutes]	1 Richard III Cap. 9 [1483]	Barter	I, 222
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D240-D253]	Barter	I, 222-3
Beale, John	[Philosophical Transactions 90. 1672/3]	Britain	I, 348
[King, Charles]	[The British Merchant 1721]	Britain	I, 349-50
Davenant, Charles	A Report to the Honourable the Commissioners [1712]	Britain	I, 356-7
Temple, William	[Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands. 1673]	Britain	I, 357
Belloni, Girolamo	De Commercio [1750/1752]	Britain	I, 358
Davenant, Charles	Discourses on the Publick revenues and on the trade of England [1698]	Britain	I, 358
Steele, Richard	The Importance of Dunkirk Consider'd [1713]	Britain	I, 358
[Wood, William]	[A Survey of Trade. 1718]	Bullion	I, 397
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D256-D295]	Cash	I, 463
Petty, William	[The Political Anatomy of Ireland. 1672] [Quoted through Cantillon]	Cash	I, 463

[Cantillon]	[D118-D143, D299-D317]	Circulation	I, 498-99
['Castaing, John']	Castaing's paper of March 28, 1729	Coin	I, 525-6
[Cantillon]	[D570-D621]	Coin	I, 526-8
['Castaing, John']	Castaing's Paper of Feb 3, 1740	Coin	I, 528
Locke, John	Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest [1691]	Coin	I, 528
Newton, Isaac	Representation relating to the Coin of England in the year 1717	Coin	I, 528-9
Belloni, Girolamo	A Dissertation on Commerce [1752]	Coin	I, 529-31
[Clement, Simon]	[A Vindication of the Bank of England. 1707]	Credit	I, 574-6
[Cantillo, Richard]	[D671-D672, D683-D689]	Credit	I, 578-9
Hutcheson, Archibald	[Some Calculations and Remarks Relating to the Present State of the Publick Debts and Funds. 1718]	Credit	I, 579
Locke, John	[Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest. 1691]	Credit	I, 579
B[arnar]d, J[ohn]	[Motion in Parliament to reduce the rate of interest. 1737]	Credit	I, 580
Hume, David	[Of Public Credit. 1752]	Credit	I, 580-1
Hume, David	[Of Public Credit. 1752]	Debt [National]	I, 630-1
[Defoe, Daniel]	[A Tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain. 1724-7]	England	I, 705-9
Halley, Edmund	['Advertisement', Philosophical Transactions, 22, 1700]	England	I, 708
[John Campbell]	[The Present State of Europe. 1750]	England	I, 713
Larue, Jean	[La Bibliothèque des jeunes négocians. 1747]	England	I, 716
Ricard, Samuel	[Traité général du commerce. 1700]	England	I, 716
Mun, Thomas	[England's Treasure by Forraign Trade. 1664]	England	I, 721
Philips, Erasmus	The State of the Nation in respect of Commerce, Debts and Money. 1725	Europe	I, 739
[Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, de]	[Spirit of the Laws. 1750]	Exchange	I, 741-3
[Dutot,Nicolas]	Political Reflections upon the Finances and Commerce of France [1739]	Exchange	I, 744
[King, Charles]	The British Merchant [1721]	Exchange	I, 748-9
Addison, Joseph	[Freeholder number 18. 1716]	Exchange	I, 749-50
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D435-D480]	Interest	I, 995-7
Hutcheson, Archibald	Letter addressed to the King. 1714	Interest	I, 997

Locke, John	[Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest. 1691]	Interest	I, 998
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D8-D17, D41-D105, D184-D201, D418-D43]	Labour	II, 1-3, 5-6
Petty, William	[The political anatomy of Ireland. 1672] [Quoted through Cantillon]	Labour	II, 3
[Decker, Matthew]	An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade [1744]	Labour	II, 3-4
[Martyn, Henry]	Spectator no. 200. [1711] [Quoted through Decker]	Labour	II, 3
Davenant, Charles	An Essay on the East-India Trade [1696] [Quoted through Decker]	Labour	II, 4
Locke, John	Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest. [1691] [Quoted through Decker]	Labour	II, 4
[Parrott, Richard]	Reflections on various subjects relating to arts and commerce. 1752]	Labour	II, 5
[Decker, Matthew]	[An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade. 1744]	Landed Interest	II, 10-11
[Petyt, William]	Britannia Languens [1680] [Quoted through Decker]	Landed Interest	II, 11
Maitland, William	The history and survey of London [1739] [Quoted through Decker]	Landed Interest	II, 11
[Craggs, Robert]	[Considerations upon a reduction of the Land-tax. 1749]	Landed Interest	II, 11-14
Petty, William	[The political anatomy of Ireland. 1691] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 12
Davenant, Charles	[Discourses on the publick revenues. 1698] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 12, 13
Locke, John	[Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest. 1691] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 12
Decker, Matthew	[An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade. 1744] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 13, 14
Wood, William	[A Survey of Trade. 1718] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 13
King, Charles	[The British Merchant. 1721] [Quoted through Craggs]	Landed Interest	II, 13
Cary, John	A Discourse on Trade [1745]	Landed Interest	II, 14-15
B[arnard] J[ohn]	Speech in the House of Commons [17 Feb. 1741]	Landed Interest	II, 15
Sprat, Thomas	[History of the Royal Society. 1667]	Landed Interest	II, 16
[Pluche, Noel Antoine]	[Spectacle de la Nature. 1750]	Manure	II, 135-6
[Hales, Stephen]	[Vegetable Staticks. 1727]	Manure	II, 137-8
Newton, Isaac	Opticks [1704] [Indirect quotations through Hales]	Manure	II, 137, 138
[Rollin, Charles]	[The Ancient History. 1736]	Manure	II, 138
[Bradley, Richard]	[A philosophical account of the works of nature. 1739]	Manure	II, 139
[Vanderlint, Jacob]	[Money Answers All Things. 1734]	Manure	II, 139-145

Nichols, William	Conference with a Theist [1696]. [Quoted through Vanderlint]	Manure	II, 141, 144
Petty, William	[Natural and political observations. 1662] [Quoted through Vanderlint]	Manure	II, 143
Derham, William	Physico-Theology [first ed. 1713] [Quoted through Vanderlint]	Manure	II, 144
Laurence, John	[A New] System of Agriculture[1726] [Quoted through Vanderlint]	Manure	II, 144
Huet, Pierre-Daniel	Histoire du Commerce et de la navigation des anciens [1716]	British Mercantile College	II, 218
Savary, Jacques	Le parfait negociant [1675]	British Mercantile College	II, 218
Straccha, Benevenuto	De Mercatura [1592]	British Mercantile College	II, 218
Ricard, Samuel	Traité général du Commerce [1700]	British Mercantile College	II, 220
Montaigne, Michel de	[Essays. 1580]	British Mercantile College	II, 221
Locke, John	Of the Conduct of the Understanding [1706]	British Mercantile College	II, 221, 228-9
Addison, Joseph	Freeholder number 30 [1716]	British Mercantile College	II, 224
Sprat, Thomas	Observations upon Monsieur de Sorbier's Voyage into England [1665]	British Mercantile College	II, 224
Temple, William	Works [1731]	British Mercantile College	II, 225
Ascham, Roger	The Schoolmaster. 1711	British Mercantile College	II, 226
Clark, John	New Latin Grammar [1733]	British Mercantile College	II, 226
Rollin, Charles	[De la maniere d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles-Lettres. 1726-8]	British Mercantile College	II, 226, 229
Locke, John	Some Thoughts Concerning Education [1693]	British Mercantile College	II, 227
Sprat, Thomas	The Works of Mr Abraham Cowley [1668]	British Mercantile College	II, 227
Scaccia, Sigismundo	Tractatus de commerciis et cambio [1669]	British Mercantile College	II, 231
Newton, Isaac	Table of the assays, weights and values of most foreign silver and gold coins [1717]	British Mercantile College	II, 231
Molloy, Charles	De jure Maritimo et Navali [1676]	British Mercantile College	II, 232
Sprat, Thomas	History of the Royal Society [1667]	British Mercantile College	II, 232
Bacon, Francis	[Essays. 1612]	British Mercantile College	II, 232, 235
Brewster, Francis	[Essays on Trade and Navigation. 1695]	British Mercantile College	II, 234
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D204-D212]	Mines	II, 271
Pettus, John	Fodinae Regales [1670]	Mines	II, 271-2
Swedenborg, Emmanuel	Regno Subterraneo [1734]	Mines	II, 273

Aristotle	Politics [4th c BC]	Money	II, 282
[Cantillon, Richard]	[D345-D384]	Money	II, 283-4
Locke, John	[Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest. 1691] [Quoted through Cantillon]	Money	II, 284
Hume, David	[Of Public Credit. 1752]	Paper Credit	II, 404
Philips, Erasmus	The State of the Nation in respect of Commerce, Debts and Money. 1725	Paper Credit	II, 404
Tacitus	Histories [1st c BC]	Paper Credit	II, 405
Davenant, Charles	Discourses on the Publick revenues and on the trade of England [1698]	Political Arithmetic	II, 487-90
Petty, William	Political Arithmetick [1690] [Quoted through Davenant]	Political Arithmetic	II, 487
Philips, Erasmus	[The State of the Nation in respect of Commerce, Debts and Money. 1725]	Siam	II, 712
Temple, William	Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands [1673]	Taxation	II, 785
Locke, John	Further considerations concerning raising the value of money [1695]	Taxation	II, 786
Fleetwood, William	A Sermon against Clipping [1694]	Taxation	II, 786
Lowndes, William	A report cointaing an essay for the amendment of silver coins [1695]	Taxation	II, 786