

# *Fas est & ab hoste doceri*

## Malachy Postlethwayt and the Gournay Circle

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### 1. Introduction

The early 1750s saw, in the words of a contemporary reviewer in the *Journal de commerce*, a *gradation rapide de succès*, ‘a sudden sweep of success’, of publications that established the Science of Commerce in France (Anonymous 1759a: 39). Until that time, he argued, French economic discourse had, especially when compared with Britain, languished in a backward state. Such useful works on trade as had been published in France before the mid-century mostly concentrated on ‘explaining the mechanics of commerce’ [*la mécanique du Commerce*]. Their authors had been ‘practitioners rather than observers’ [*plus pratiques qu’observateurs*] (*ibid.* 25).<sup>1</sup> By contrast, since the later 17<sup>th</sup> century ‘famous English Authors already treated Commerce as a Science, as the foundation of political interest and the power of States, whereas [...] the French genius scarcely grasped the importance of Commerce, and the English Authors were unknown. The best among them were translated [into French] only recently’ (*ibid.* 24-5). Then quite suddenly, still according to the reviewer, France had become enlightened in matters of trade. And amongst all the wonderful new economic publications ‘the most luminous, the most exact and most profound work about commerce that has yet appeared’ was the *Elémens du commerce*, published in 1754 (*ibid.* 34).

It would perhaps be naïve to take this account at face value, as an attempt at objective historiography. Rather, it should be understood as a partisan championing of a novel

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<sup>1</sup> As examples of useful ‘mechanical’ works the reviewer named *Le parfait négociant* of Savary senior, the *Dictionnaire de Commerce* of Savary junior and the *Traité du Commerce & le négoce d’Amsterdam* of Ricard. In his opinion, only the first French work that had instead ‘considered Commerce as a Science, as one of the most important objects of the administration of a State’ had been François Melon’s *Essai Politique sur le Commerce*, first published in 1734 (although reviewer actually referred to the enlarged and more well-known edition of 1736). He further noted that soon after several of Melon’s views had been corrected by Dutot’s *Réflexions politiques sur les Finances & sur le Commerce* (1738, after being first published in the form of letters in 1735) and that in 1740 Deschamps had in turn published an *Examen* of Dutot’s work (*ibid.*32). These works were well known by the members of the Gournay circle.

body of commercial literature.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, contemporary observers, as well as modern historians, have repeatedly confirmed several aspects of the above outline of a new literary movement. First, the sudden availability from about 1753 of a large number of publications about commercial matters, and their favourable reception by the French reading public, was frequently noted at the time. While in January 1753 Forbonnais was still bemoaning the fact that ‘we have in our language so few works about trade’, by March 1755 Grimm’s *Correspondance littéraire* noted ‘since 18 months nothing is as common in France as works about trade’.<sup>3</sup> Through mostly very recent scholarship we now know in much greater detail that this outpouring of publications was the result of an orchestrated campaign of a group of young authors and aspiring administrators tutored and patronized by Vincent de Gournay (1712-1759).<sup>4</sup>

Second, the view that French commercial authors were playing intellectual catch-up with their English counterparts was expressed more than once at the time. In 1752 Gournay himself wrote that ‘in our country all errors [in economic regulations and policies] and many others are as deeply entrenched and widely accepted as they were in England 80 years ago’. One principal way to make amends was to translate and elaborate upon what were considered the best works of the British economic literature. Thus appeared in quick succession translations and adaptations of works by Culpeper, Child, Cary, Davenant, Charles King, Gee, Decker, Tucker and Hume.<sup>5</sup>

Third, of the group of authors belonging to the Gournay circle it was François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais (1720-1800) whose works, achieved the more lasting and Europe wide fame.<sup>6</sup> Long neglected by historians, recent studies have detailed the considerable impact Forbonnais had for about two decades through translations and adaptations of his writings on public debates and administrations in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Portugal.<sup>7</sup> Particularly his *Elémens du commerce*

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<sup>2</sup> Cavarzere (2014: 1138-9) discusses the enthusiasm of the contributors to the *Journal de commerce*, a periodical printed in Brussels between 1759 and 1762, for the ‘new science’. He notes that from the outset the editors considered Forbonnais’s *Elémens* in particular as ‘the sacred text for this new conception of commerce’.

<sup>3</sup> Forbonnais (1753: x) and Grimm (1813, i, 318). Similarly Butel Dumont (or Forbonnais) (1755b: vii) welcomed the ‘circumstances that have existed only since about two years [...] I mean the taste our Nation has got since then for all matters of trade’.

<sup>4</sup> The best introduction to the Gournay circle is the set of essays edited by Charles and Théré (2011). It builds on various studies about this group of authors that have appeared mostly since the pioneering contributions by Tsuda (1983) and Murphy (1986a), including Meyssonier (1989) Larrère (1992) Charles (2006) and Skorniki (2006). In this literature there is agreement that ‘membership’ of the group is mostly defined by being part of the network of contacts of Gournay and/or having published, during the 1750s, works that on the whole are in line with Gournay’s programme for economic and administrative reform. This necessarily loose criterion makes the exact extent of the circle somewhat fuzzy. Charles (2011: 87) counts 20 members, plus another eight persons ‘on the margin’; Skornicki (2006: 6) puts the number at 16. The number of works associated with the circle is estimated at about 40 (Charles 2011:12; Skornicki 2006: 16).

<sup>5</sup> Provide known bibliographical details and qualifications.

<sup>6</sup> That is not to say that other publications from authors belonging to the same circle did not have their own career in Europe. Especially Butel-Dumont’s *Essai sur l’Etat du Commerce d’Angleterre* (1755) had its own European impact, as Reinert’s (2011) shows in great detail.

<sup>7</sup> The depth of the neglect of Forbonnais’s economics in 20<sup>th</sup> century can best be illustrated by the fact that in the most popular general histories of economic thought this author’s name or works are either not

(1754), once remembered as an epochal *‘ouvrage traduit dans toutes les langues de l’Europe’*, has now once more started to be seen as having been at the heart of nothing less than a ‘Forbonnais moment’ in the history of European economic thought and policy making.<sup>8</sup>

The one nation, however, that appears to have remained immune to the cross-border ‘cultural exchange’ of French economic ideas in this period, not just to Forbonnais’s works but to the entire Gournay-inspired campaign for a ‘new science’ of commercial administration, was an impervious Britain. Authors and politicians from the very nation whose technological, commercial and military prowess inspired such grudging admiration and apprehension, and which was largely responsible for the outburst of literary activity in France, seem to have all but ignored the new economic writings from across the Channel. This, at least, is the impression one gets from traditional accounts of the relations between French and British economic thought in the central decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: there is barely mention of a possible British reception of works emerging from the Gournay circle.<sup>9</sup> More recent contributions too, in which the importance of the Gournay-inspired output is studied in great detail, nevertheless confirm that received view.<sup>10</sup> Amongst the latter, Reinert (2013: 120) provides statistics showing the opening up of a significant imbalance in the international flow of ideas, precisely in the 1750s, when the sharp increase in the number of translations from English economic writings into French, German and other languages was not reciprocated by a greater number of translations of writings of the same genre into English.<sup>11</sup>

The suggested explanation for this one-way traffic is that being the most successful

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mentioned at all (e.g. Roll 1938, Blaug 1962, Rima 1967, or Ekelund and Hébert 1990), very briefly (e.g. Screpanti and Zamagni 1993:47) or in a very disparaging manner (Schumpeter 1954: 174, see below note...(conclusion). Of course, it is rare for an author to be forgotten completely and French studies like Fleury 1915 and Morrisson and Goffin 1967 kept some interest going. A more sustained interest in Forbonnais’s work is of a more recent date. See amongst others Alimento (1985), Larrère (1992, chapter 4), van den Berg (2002: 299-303), Sonenscher (2007: 173-189), Hont (2008: ), Orain (2010) (2013) and Demals and Hyard (2015). Special mention needs to go to the excellent contributions to the special issue on the international diffusion of Forbonnais ideas in the *History of European Ideas* of 2014 edited by Alimento.

<sup>8</sup> The first description is from the *Biographie nouvelle de contemporains* 18<sup>e</sup> vol. p.219. The phrase ‘Forbonnais moment’ is coined by Alimento (2014a: 1014).

<sup>9</sup> Groenewegen (2002:125-43) offers what is perhaps the most detailed short study of French influences on British economics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the mid-century he considers the influence of Melon, Dutot and Montesquieu on Hume and that the physiocrats on Smith. He concludes, not unlike the general view of Hutchison (1988) that there was during this period ‘a gradual increase of French influence on British economics, rising to a crescendo in the case of Smith’ (Groenewegen 2002: 137). The only passing mention (*ibid.* 133) of an author related to Gournay is Stuart’s quotation of Dangeul (1754), which may, however, have been an indirect quotation. See n 20 below.

<sup>10</sup> None of the contributions mentioned in notes 3, 4 and 5 above pay more than passing attention to a possible reception of authors from the Gournay circle in Britain.

<sup>11</sup> Of course translations are only one form in which ideas are exchanged between nations, language areas and cultural spaces. Since it was more common for Englishmen and women to be able to read French than it was for Frenchmen and women to read English, the mere dearth of translations into English may somewhat underestimate the reception of French economic thought in Britain. Still, Reinert’s findings are indeed striking.

military, commercial and colonial power of Europe, the British showed little urgency to take lessons from continental authors on matters of trade (Reinert 2013:121). Such an explanation, however, risks over-estimating the confidence British commercial authors of the mid-century felt in their superiority over the great competitor nation. One gets a different impression from reading, for example, works like Tucker (1749), Postlethwayt (1749) (1751-5) (1756), Temple (1758), Anderson (1763); or Mildmay (1765). These works displayed pretty much the same mixture of admiration and angst about the perceived commercial prowess and the military and colonial ambitions of France, as the French exhibited about Britain.<sup>12</sup> This was of course a time of intense commercial rivalry, of skirmishes in the colonies and, in 1756 once again, of open war between the nations.

In this context highlighting the strengths of the enemy was seen as a badge of patriotic watchfulness.<sup>13</sup> A typical example of this is Postlethwayt's *A Short State of the Progress of French Trade and Navigation*, published in the spring of 1756, and meant as a wake-up call that France would make a formidable opponent in the forthcoming war:

in case of an open rupture I have judged it seasonable to undeceive those [who have too mean and contemptible an opinion of the commerce and navigation of France] lest our being lulled asleep with the weakness of the enemy, and our own omnipotency, when compared to their power, might be attended with consequences not easily retrievable (Postlethwayt 1756:1).

In Postlethwayt's opinion not only should one know one's enemy, by assessing their strengths, where possible one should learn from them and adopt their "best practices". As he pointed out in his *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, quoting Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 'it [would not] be in the least derogate from our honour to follow [the French] example in many things worthy of imitation since all the world acknowledges the reasonableness of that useful maxim, *Fas est & ab hoste doceri* [right it is to be taught even by the enemy] (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 312).

It is the aim of this paper to demonstrate that for Postlethwayt this motto extended to the emulation of the new wave of French economic literature. On the one hand, this is perhaps not surprising since in the end, as Gournay himself was not adverse to pointing out in official correspondence, the new ideas about the better management of the economy, far from being idle contemplation, were meant as part of the very armory of the state.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Postlethwayt's extensive use of the works of one of Gournay's

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<sup>12</sup> For the volatile patriotic atmosphere in this period see e.g. Black 1986, Anderson 2001 or Szabo 2007. Koehn 1994 suggests that nerves only settled, and more self-assured sentiments of economic superiority took root with the conclusion of the Seven Years' War.

<sup>13</sup> Recognizing this, Turgot, not quite yet the cosmopolitan of later years (cf. n.19 below), saw it as his patriotic duty to warn the readers of his translation of Tucker that wherever the English author praised the French this should not be understood as a token of amity, but of enmity: 'I will add another word on the subject of some passages in which the Author [Tucker] recommends that the English emulate the example of our [i.e., the French] conduct and our success. This is a common practice among Writers of that nation. They aim by it at two things only, to rouse their compatriots and to keep us in indolence. Let us not be their dupes. Let's learn instead not to mistake our flatterers for our friends or those who point out our faults for bad Frenchmen' (Turgot 1755, x).

<sup>14</sup> See Gournay's dispatch of 1755, the muscular tone of which is captured by the title, *Moyens proposé pour agir le plus offensivement possible contre les Anglais*. Printed in Charles, Lefebvre and Théré (2011: 351-67).

protégées, Forbonnais, comes as a revelation, since this literary dependency and its significance have so far been completely overlooked.

The paper is structured as follows. Section two briefly reviews what has previously been known about the reception in Britain of writings from the Gournay stable. Section three then establishes the particulars of Postlethwayt's extensive plagiarism of Forbonnais's *Elémens du commerce*. Section four discussed the specific uses Postlethwayt made of Forbonnais's writing in confirmation of his own views. Section five draws some conclusion about the significance of this hitherto unknown case for the 'science of commerce' in mid-century Britain.

## **Section 2. Reception of the Gournay circle in Britain: apparently little to report**

In the summer of 1754 Thomas Osborne, publisher at Gray's Inn, London, published the work *Remarks on the advantages & disadvantages of France & of Great Britain with respect to Commerce*. The title page carried the subtitle 'Being a (pretended) Translation from the English, written by Sir John Nickolls, and printed at Leyden 1754. Translated from the French Original'. This French original, *Remarques* by Louis-Joseph Plumard de Dangeul (1722-1777), had been published only a few months earlier, at the end of February (Murphy 1986a: 309) meeting with immediate success in France and abroad.<sup>15</sup> The anonymous English translator apparently possessed some information about the real identity of the author, noting that this Frenchman was attached to the court of Versailles and had spent two years travelling in Britain.<sup>16</sup>

The significance of this English translation of Dangeul's most popular work is that it is the only product from an author close to Gournay that modern historians have noted for having been adopted in Britain (see e.g. Hont 2008: 320 n.21; Reinert 2011:59). The immediate British response to its contents can be gauged from a detailed review in *The Monthly Review*. First, this review noted, the French author had 'candidly acknowledged' that he 'drew the first hint' for his work from a pamphlet by the reverend Mr. Josiah Tucker of Bristol. Indeed, one of the merits of *Remarks* was to bring Tucker's pamphlet to the attention of the public because the latter had been 'a performance of real utility to have escaped so long unnoticed' (Anon. 1754: 142).<sup>17</sup> The reviewer went on to praise

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<sup>15</sup> In April 1754 Grimm's *Correspondance Littéraire* notes that Dangeul's book was sold out in days and that further prints were under way. At least three reprints and an augmented edition of the French work were published in 1754 alone. Apart from the English translation, a Swedish one was published in the same year. In the next two years followed Spanish, Danish, German, and Italian translations.

<sup>16</sup> Dangeul was indeed *maître d'hôtel de la Reine* and *gentilhomme ordinaire du Roi* as well as *maître des Chambres des Comptes de Paris*. Not much appears to be known about his career. Even though he appears to have worked for some time as an economic spy (see Skornicki 2006: 8), I have been unable to confirm whether he had actually travelled in Britain. Very few contemporaries were fooled into believing that there was an actual person called Sir John Nickolls responsible for the original English source of Dangeul's book. See Grimm (15 March 1755).

<sup>17</sup> The pamphlet is identified as *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages which respectively attend France and Great Britain with regard to Trade*. It also correctly pointed out that the first edition of

Dangeul's sentiments on a range of topics, noting that 'an intelligent reader will scarce fail of being agreeably entertained with many of our Remarker's reflections upon population (as he expresses it) the employment of individuals, the poor, marriages, and naturalization' (ibid. 164).<sup>18</sup> In addition, he commended Dangeul's criticism of landowners' habits of spending their incomes in cities, thereby impoverishing the countryside; of the giving of prizes for *belles lettres*, rather than for useful inventions in France; of high interest rates; of the venality of the parliamentary system in England; of the guilds in so far as they constituted a bar against competition and improvement; and of exclusive trading companies (ibid. 145-63). As a final comment on this series of themes, commonly found in the new commercial literature emerging from the Gournay circle, the reviewer offered the following reflection:

Whether this performance was, or was not, intended (...) by the author only for the instruction of his own countrymen, let us not be ashamed of profiting by it. If the advice given in this performance is wholesome, let it not be rejected even tho' it should come from an enemy; *fas es et ab hoste doceri* (ibid. 167).

The extent to which subsequent British economists took this Ovidian advice to heart and learned from Dangeul's work is the question. There is only limited evidence of a response to the *Remarks*. First, Josiah Tucker who must have soon got to know the English translation, recommended its reading in his *Instructions for Travellers* of 1757:

I would beg Leave to recommend Sir *J. Child* [i.e., *A new Discourse of Trade*] as a Commercial Writer of the first Note: And then at a respectful Distance after him, the *Remarks on the Advantages and Disadvantages of France and Great Britain in regard to Trade* may be no improper Book; viz. because it exhibits a comparative View of the Commerce of both Kingdoms, and enters deeper into the Inconveniencies or Obstructions attending the *French Government*, regarding Trade, than any Author whatever (Tucker 1757: 9).<sup>19</sup>

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this pamphlet had appeared in 1750 (ibid. 142 n.). The review went on to give a good assessment of the extent of literary dependency between the two works, noting that the French author, besides the title, had 'borrowed not only the sentiments, but even the expression of Mr. Tucker', although the latter was only the case in the first seven paragraphs (ibid. 142). This view is then supported with a comparison of passages from the two works (ibid. 142-4). After finishing the discussion of the translation of Dangeul's work, the reviewer returns to Tucker's pamphlet with a summary of the latter's 16 proposals. All in all, by establishing that Dangeul's work had been neither a complete fake nor a literal translation of Tucker's *Brief Essay*, the reviewer did a good job, especially considering that later commentators have differed on this matter. Some, after correctly rejecting the pretended authorship of Sir John Nickolls, have jumped to the incorrect conclusion that there had been no relevant English original at all. On the other hand, Cornish (2004), for example goes too far by stating that Dangeul's work was a straightforward translation of Tucker's *Brief Essay*, perhaps due to Tucker's own assessment that it was 'in a great Measure a Translation' (see note 16 below).

<sup>18</sup> Note the comment in brackets about the use of the word 'population'. This was the translator's rendering of the French word *population* and the comment suggests that the reviewer thought the English equivalent somewhat unusual. This confirms the argument by Théré and Rohrbasser (2011) that rather than being an Anglicism introduced into the French language around this time, the adoption may have gone the other way.

<sup>19</sup> He continued: 'This Tract is in a great Measure a Translation of my *Essay on Trade*, and other Commercial Pieces. But as the Author is a native of *France*, viz. The Marquis *D'angeul* (though appearing

In the same year John Smith, in the enlarged edition of his *Memoirs of Wool*, included abstracts from the English translation of Dangeul on the topic of the (undesirable) export of raw British wool and the (desirable) home manufacture of woolen cloth. This was followed by several pages of reflections on the French author's views (see Smith 1757, ii, 264-73). Beyond this examination of a more specialist issue, few British authors appear to have taken notice of Dangeul's *Remarks*, or at least such impact is hard to detect. A rare exception is Sir James Steuart who a decade later would briefly mention the work in his *Inquiry*, although intriguingly the reference appears to be an indirect one through Quesnay's entry 'Grains' in the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>20</sup>

If these few references to Dangeul's work would be the sum total of the impact that writings from the Gournay group had *outré-Manche* then it would be right to conclude that this influence was rather limited indeed, especially in comparison to what occurred in a number of continental European countries. There is, however, a more significant and more hidden part to this story. This is the extensive use Malachy Postlethwayt (1707-1767) made of Forbonnais's writings, to which we now turn.

### 3. The *Elémens* in Britain

Compared with Dangeul's case, the reception in Britain of the writings of his cousin,

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under the borrowed Name of an *Englishman*, Sir *John Nicholls*) he was capable of making great Improvements on my Plan; and being likewise employed in the Finances, he could speak to the Difficulties and Discouragements attending Trade in that Kingdom, with more Experience and Certainty than a Stranger was capable of doing' (Tucker 1757: 9-10). The fact that Tucker had been able to find out Dangeul's name, as well as his knowledge of Forbonnais's *Elémens* as early as 1755 (see below), suggests more than a passing interest on his part in the new commercial literature from France. Despite an apparently short visit to the continent (see Tucker 1757: 32 and Hume 1932, 2, 183 –although it is not clear that this refers to the same trip and when exactly it took place), evidence of personal contacts with French economists dates from much later. In 1768 Tucker attempted to send a copy, through the intermediation of Hume, of his *Elements of Commerce* to Turgot. The *Elements* had never been published but 'about a hundred copies' were printed off in 1755 for circulation among friends. Tucker hoped for Turgot (and Morellet and Montigny) to add comments to a copy (letters of Tucker to Hume of 25 June 1768 and Hume to Turgot of 8 July 1768 in Hume 1932, 2, 182-3). On 12 December 1770 Turgot responded directly to Tucker expressing regret that they had not personally met when Tucker was in France (Hume had told him Tucker had wanted to meet his translator) and that the copy of *Elements* had never reached him, having got lost in the post between Paris and Limoges. He informed Tucker that apart from his translation of *Reflections on ... Naturalization* (Tucker 1751; Turgot 1755), he had more recently translated his *The Case of Going to War* (1763), a translation that has apparently got lost. Instead Turgot, declaring himself a citizen of the world and an enemy of the jealousy of trade, sent a copy of his *Réflexions* to Tucker (see Schelle, 1913-21, iii, 421-2).

<sup>20</sup> Steuart (1767, i, 145) quotes the opinion which 'I have found advanced by an author of consideration' that in Britain 'a plentiful year produces five years of nourishment for the inhabitants'. As his source he gives 'Advantages and disadvantages of France and Great Britain, &c article Grain'. The last words suggest that Steuart was quoting Dangeul through Quesnay. In his entry *Grains* in volume 7 of the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1757, the latter had quoted this precise opinion from Dangeul (1754: 84). See Quesnay (2005: 195).

Forbonnais is a more complicated story. The few explicit references to Forbonnais in the contemporary English commercial literature appear, at first sight, as isolated and inconsequential facts. One of these facts is that by the beginning of 1755 Forbonnais's *Elémens du commerce* was for sale in London. That much is clear from an advert, dated 3 January 1755, placed by the Huguenot bookseller Paul Vaillant (1713-1802). It listed Forbonnais's work among a range of foreign titles available in his shop 'facing Southampton-street in the Strand'.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps Josiah Tucker obtained a copy within the next few months, because by the summer of 1755 the reverend from Bristol was at least aware of the existence of the French work. For some time he had been writing a book with a title that was curiously identical to that of Forbonnais, namely *Elements of Commerce*. In the Advertisement to this work, apparently printed in July 1755, he felt it necessary to assure his readers that the similarity in the French and English titles was a pure coincidence:

the Principles laid down in the ensuing Treatise are, for the most part General and Universal; viz. such as would suit (with very little Alteration) any Kingdom, State, or Climate whatever; and are therefore called the *Elements of Commerce* - A Title designed by the Author, as his Friends know very well, several Years before a French Writer [*i.e.*, Forbonnais] appeared with the same (Tucker 1755, advertisement).<sup>22</sup>

A comparison between the two books shows that they differ fundamentally in structure and content, which suggests that Tucker had indeed not relied on the French *Elémens du commerce* when he was writing his own.

Instead the earliest actual quotation from *Elémens* in an English work dates from the autumn of the same year and occurs in a rather prominent place, namely as the epigraph on the title page of the second volume of Malachy Postlethwayt's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. This passage, cited in the original French, reads:

*Je crois avoir rendu service au commerce, de l'avoir fait connoître comme science dans une nation qui n'y avoit attaché pendant long-temps qu'une idée mécanique, &chez laquelle l'idée du noble n'est pas toujours jointe à celle de l'utile bien reconnu. La politique & l'humanité assigneront au commerce une place honorable parmi les autres sciences; & la profession du commerce sera noble, lorsque ceux que leur range ou leur genie distinguent des autres homes, parleront en sa faveur. ELEMENS DU COMMERCE.*<sup>23</sup>

The quotation is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, as we saw, the distinction

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<sup>21</sup> *Public Advertiser* (issue 6285). Other economic works listed are number 8, *Essay [sic] sur la Police de France sur les Grains* [C.-J. Herbert 1753] and number 11. *Dell Origine e del Commercio della Moneta* [by G.R. Carli 1751]. On the important role Huguenot booksellers played in making French language, and other continental, literature available in London see Hoftijzer and Lankhorst (2007) and Shaw (2003).

<sup>22</sup> The Postscript to the work is dated July 10, 1755. It seems likely that the Advertisement was written at about the same time. About 100 copies of the work were printed and distributed amongst administrators and friends.

<sup>23</sup> 'I believe to have rendered a service to [the study of] trade by having shown it to be a science to a nation that since long has only attached mechanical ideas to it, and where the idea of nobility is not always joined with what is properly useful. Politics and humanity assign to [the study of] trade an honourable place amongst the other sciences; and the profession of trade will be noble, when it is spoken of favourably by those whose rank and genius elevates them above other men' (my translation).

between the study of commerce as a ‘mechanical’ art and a ‘political’ art was made more frequently in France at the time. By borrowing the passage as the epigraph for his *Dictionary*, Postlethwayt suggested that he intended his major work, just as Forbonnais had intended his *Elémens*, to be not merely a ‘mechanical’ work, i.e., covering the specific practical and technical aspects of commercial operations. Above all he saw it as a contribution to a ‘commercial science’, focusing on the proper management of the economy from a national and political perspective. Indeed, as will be discussed in section 4.2, the visions of Postlethwayt and Forbonnais as to the contents of this science show remarkable similarities.

Second, and more immediately, the quotation, which is the only referenced citation of *Elémens* in any of Postlethwayt’s publications, would *appear* to show a familiarity with that French work while he was still working on his *Dictionary*. This raises the question whether he slipped in other passages from Forbonnais in less prominent places of this publication. It is a question that deserves to be taken seriously since Postlethwayt had a distinct habit of including extracts, sometimes from very recent publications and often without acknowledgement, throughout the two volumes of that extensive compilation.

A detailed reading of the *Dictionary*, however, does not yield any more passages from Forbonnais’s writings. Admittedly it is difficult to be sure about this, partly because of the large volume of the material concerned and partly because one can indeed find numerous views in the *Dictionary* that, as we will see, are similar in *content*, though less so in precise *wording*, to ones expressed by his French contemporary.

Nevertheless, it is possible to say with some confidence that no further passages from the *Elémens* are present in the body of the *Dictionary*. This is due to the timings of the publication of two works. It turns out that the title page of Postlethwayt’s work on which the single quotation occurred was the last thing that was printed before volume two was published in book form. This publication took place on 22 November 1755, after the title page had first been published in mid October.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, the body of what was to constitute the second volume had already started appearing in the form of a continued sequence of approximately weekly issues from September 1753, hence *before* the publication of *Elémens*.

For clarification, the time line in table 1 shows the relevant dates in the concurrent publication efforts of Postlethwayt and of selected authors belonging to the Gournay circle. The latter works are selected on the basis that they are present in the catalogue of Postlethwayt’s library drawn up after his death in 1767 (about which more in a moment).

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<sup>24</sup> This separate publication containing the title page was in the form of issue number 160 (advertised in the *London Evening Post* of 16 October 1755).

Table 1 Time line.

Postlethwayt		Works by members of the Gournay circle in Postlethwayt's library (numbers in brackets are catalogue numbers)
	<b>1751</b>	
<i>Dictionary</i> Issue 1	November	
	<b>1752</b>	
	<b>1753</b>	
<i>Dictionary</i> Issue 59	January	(3263) <i>Theorie &amp; Pratique du Commerce &amp; de la Marine</i> [tr. Forbonnais]
<i>Dictionary</i> Issue 80	July	(8569) <i>Le Negotiant Anglois</i> [tr. Forbonnais]
<i>Dictionary</i> vol. 1 (issues 1-84- A-K)	Sept	
	December	(8571) <i>Considerations sur les Finances d'Espagne</i> [Forbonnais]
	<b>1754</b>	
	February	(8568) <i>Avantages et Desavantages du Comm Fr, &amp; Angl.</i> [Plumard Dangeul]
<i>Dictionary</i> Issue 105	March	(8570) <i>Elémens du Commerce, 2 vol</i> [Forbonnais]
	July?	(7305) <i>Advantages and Disadvantages of French Commerce</i>
	<b>1755</b>	
		(8558) <i>Finances d'Espagne</i> [Forbonnais]
<i>Dictionary</i> Issue 160	Mid October	(8564) <i>Commerce des Colonies Angloises</i> [Butel-Dumont/Forbonnais]
<i>Dictionary</i> vol. 2 (issues 85-155: L-Z)	22 Nov	
	<b>1756</b>	
<i>A Short State</i>	Mid May	
<i>Great Britain's True System</i>	6 Dec	
	<b>1757</b>	
<i>Britain's Commercial Interest</i>	12 July	

As indicated, the first edition of *Elémens du commerce* was published in Paris in March 1754. However, Postlethwayt used a copy of the second edition, which was not published before the late summer or autumn of that same year. This is suggested not only by the fact that the passage Postlethwayt used as epigraph for his *Dictionary* only occurred in the second edition of *Elémens*, but is confirmed by the further finding that the plagiarized excerpts he would soon after commit to his next works, contain passages that only first appeared in the second edition.<sup>25</sup> By the time that second edition was published in Paris, the *Dictionary* had already reached at least issue number 120 (end of July) or even number 140 (beginning of December), that is, somewhere between the letters P and S. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that at least a few months will have passed before Postlethwayt got hold of a copy of *Elémens* and digested its contents. By then, he had reached the last letters of the alphabet and was in something of a rush to be done with

<sup>25</sup> Postlethwayt's epigraph passage is found on the last (unnumbered) page of the *Avertissement* of the second edition of *Elémens*. The details of Postlethwayt's extensive plagiarism is discussed in section 3.2 below. Here it should be noted that the conclusion that Postlethwayt used the second edition is also confirmed by the fact that passages that only first appeared in the second edition can be found in these translations. E.g. the additional passage in the second edition, Forbonnais (1754, ii, 342-46) is found in translation in Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 541-3).

his gargantuan work.<sup>26</sup> By mid-May 1755 the publication of issue 155 completed the alphabet. In a word, Postlethwayt's acquaintance with *Elémens*, which is evident by October of that year, may simply have come too late for the inclusion of any further passages in his *Dictionary*.

Within a year, however, Postlethwayt had translated most, if not all, of *Elémens* into English and started to incorporate extensive excerpts in his next publications. Before looking at this surprising case of plagiarism in more detail, it is useful to look again at table 1. As indicated, the French titles listed were present in the catalogue of Postlethwayt's library that was drawn up after his death.<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that even though Postlethwayt owned Dangeul's work, in both its French and English editions, as well as Butel Dumont's *Commerce des colonies angloises* he does not appear to have borrowed any extended passages from these books.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps this indicates that amongst the writings emanating from the Gournay circle, it were especially those of Forbonnais that struck a chord with him. Besides *Elémens* we find no fewer than four other works by Forbonnais. Of one of these, namely *Le Négotiant Anglois*, as we will see, Postlethwayt (1757a) also incorporated a long excerpt. The other three works do not appear to figure in Postlethwayt 1757a or b.<sup>29</sup>

There is a good reason why he would not have used the earliest of them, that is, Forbonnais's translation of the influential work of the Spanish reforming statesman Gerónimo Uztáriz (1670-1732), *Théorie & Pratique du Commerce & de la Marine*<sup>30</sup>: Postlethwayt relied instead on the somewhat earlier English translation of Uztáriz by John Kippax. In fact, as Forbonnais acknowledged in the introduction to his own translation, it was this English translation that had partly 'awoken our curiosity about this work' since 'the English, who are in a position to provide other nations with examples and lessons on matters of trade, do not feel it beneath themselves to take notice of this work. The translation, dedicated to the Prince of Wales, which appeared in London in 1751 was met with applause' (Forbonnais 1753a: ix; my translation). More precisely, the

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<sup>26</sup> See Cantillon (2015: 19-20).

<sup>27</sup> As a note of caution it should be pointed out that Davis and Reymers (1768), the sales catalogue listing the contents of Postlethwayt's library, also lists the libraries of other recently deceased people, especially the priest and literary critic Zachary Grey (1688-1766) and a mathematician, one Thomas Cranmer. Apart from the titles in a section with the specific heading 'Mr. Postlethwayte's Collection of Single Tracts', one cannot be absolutely sure which previous owners the titles had belonged to. However, what appears to have happened is that the cataloguers rather than mixing up the separate libraries, ordered each library by book sizes and language. This is suggested by the repeat occurrence of similar categories in the large catalogue, which contains over 10,000 titles. ....

<sup>28</sup> Alimento (2013: 218) establishes that this work was in fact written jointly by Butel-Dumont and Forbonnais.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps *Considerations sur les Finances d'Espagne* and *Finances d'Espagne* should not be treated separate titles since the second work, published in 1755 was an extended edition of the first. However, it should be noted that the 1755 edition contained an important additional short treatise, *Réflexions sur la nécessité de comprendre l'étude du Commerce et des Finances dans celle de la politique*, that was akin of programme for the new science of commerce, of which Postlethwayt would have approved. See Alimento (2014a: 1020). However, Postlethwayt does not appear to quote this text anywhere.

<sup>30</sup> On this translation see Guasti (2014).

principal English author to take notice of Uztáriz's work was Postlethwayt.<sup>31</sup> In a number of the entries of his *Dictionary* he quoted, paraphrased, or referred to 'the sage Spaniard'.<sup>32</sup> If, therefore, Postlethwayt did not originally get to know Uztáriz's work through the intermediation of Forbonnais, their shared fascination with the Spaniard's ideas about the promotion of a variety of branches of manufacture and the vigorous enforcement of commercial policies is telling. As will be argued below, it is indicative of wider similarities between their economic visions.

Such shared interests can be seen for a range of other authors too, both British and French. As noted, the authors mentored by Gournay focused much of their creative energies on commenting on and elaborating the views of earlier British authors. Postlethwayt's choice of British authors shows interesting similarities with the ones favoured by the Gournay circle. To give some examples, while Forbonnais championed the political arithmetic of Charles Davenant, inserting that author's 'Of the Use of Political Arithmetic' at the beginning of *Le négociant anglois*, it was precisely the same discourse that Postlethwayt included as the entry 'Political Arithmetic' of his *Dictionary*.<sup>33</sup> While Forbonnais played an important role in promoting the merits of political arithmetic on the continent (see Alimento 2014a: 2018-19), Postlethwayt was part of a similar mid-century revival of interest in Britain (see Hoppit 1996).

Charles King's *The British Merchant*, freely translated into French by Forbonnais and exercising a formative influence on his economic thought (see Alimento 2014b), was of central importance to Postlethwayt too judging by the frequent quotations from this work in the 'political' examinations of trade in the *Dictionary*.<sup>34</sup> Virtually all other British

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<sup>31</sup> It is not implied hereby that Forbonnais had Postlethwayt in mind when he noted the 'applause' for Uztáriz in Britain. He may simply have been referring to the positive reviews that appeared in the British press upon the publication of the translation, e.g. in the *Monthly Review*, vol 5, August 1751, 161-178. Fernández Durán (1998) discusses the influence of Uztáriz in Britain. Apart from Postlethwayt he finds little direct textual evidence for such influence, although he correctly notes that various British politicians and authors of the time shared similar views on the nurturing of trade and manufacturing. It is worth noting the speed with which Postlethwayt adopted passages from Uztáriz in his writings. The first edition of the English translation of Uztáriz by John Kippax was advertised in June 1751. Postlethwayt's earliest quotations from this translation are in the entry 'Biscay', contained in issue 24 which appeared in April 1752. Fernández Durán (1998: 36) suggests that Postlethwayt knew Uztáriz's work (presumably the extended posthumous edition of 1742) before it was translated into English, but provides no evidence. The other prominent British author who quoted 'Ustaritz' was Adam Smith (see Smith 1776 V.ii.k.67). Smith owned a copy of the English translation.

<sup>32</sup> See 'Biscay' (i, 284), 'Britain' (i, 354), 'Catalonia' (i, 469-70), 'Cloth' (i, 513), 'Fishery' (i, 785), 'Manufactures' (ii, 129), 'Merchant Courts' (ii, 236), 'Parliament' (ii, 417-18). In Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 282-94) too a long passage is quoted from Uztáriz (part of which had already been included in the entries 'Biscay' and 'Fishery'). This passage is introduced with the following statement: 'The present commercial system of Spain being grounded on that so zealously recommended by that great Spanish patriot and statesman Don Geronymo Utzaritz [sic], we shall shew his sentiments in regard to the fisheries which he exhorts his countrymen to strike into'.

<sup>33</sup> Both men took the text from Davenant's *Discourses on the Publick Revenues, and on the Trade of England*, 2 vols (London 1697/8), I, 1-36. Postlethwayt lifted the text for the whole of the entry 'Political Arithmetic' (*Dictionary* ii, 487-90, first published in an issue that appeared in August 1754) nearly verbatim from Davenant, typically without giving the source.

<sup>34</sup> In van den Berg (2016) I attempt to quantitatively demonstrate the centrality of 'political' entries within the *Dictionary* by means of a network mapping of all cross-references in that work. The most 'central'

authors that were translated or commented upon by the Gournay circle, i.e., Child, Cary, Gee, Decker and Hume, make their appearances in relevant entries of Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*.<sup>35</sup> That Postlethwayt's interest extended to the French economic literature of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is evinced by the fact that the sales catalogue of books that was drawn up after his death in 1767 lists, beyond the books identified above (table 1), more than 40 French titles on economic subjects, somewhat widely defined.<sup>36</sup> In his *Dictionary* Postlethwayt had frequently recourse to these French sources. That is to say, not only did he retain a considerable amount of material from Savary's *Dictionnaire du commerce*, mostly on technical subjects, he also included fragments from subsequent French authors such as Melon, Dutot, Montesquieu, and Duhamel.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, a special case was the work of Cantillon and not only because it is not clear whether he should be considered a British or a French author. After having remained in manuscript for two decades, Postlethwayt was the first to put long fragments from the seminal *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General* in print by including them throughout his *Dictionary*.<sup>38</sup> Coincidentally, a few years later someone from the Gournay circle prepared the French print edition of Cantillon's work. It is unlikely that Postlethwayt knew about the circumstance of the French publication of the *Essai*, but it is fascinating to find that once Postlethwayt got to know Forbonnais's *Elémens* he perceived them as complementary works (see below section 4.1).

All in all, one may say that the publication efforts of Postlethwayt and Forbonnais on either side of the Channel were more than just synchronous events. There was also a significant overlap in terms of the body of commercial literature that inspired the two men. In a real sense, by drawing from many of the same sources, Postlethwayt already spoke the same language as Forbonnais before he read the Frenchman's works. This explains why he would have been fascinated by the *Elémens* as soon as he encountered this publication.

### 3.2 How much did Postlethwayt borrow from the *Elémens*?

As was already noted, the year after Postlethwayt finished work on his *Universal Dictionary* he translated, or had translated, the larger part of the *Elémens du commerce*. It is important to stress the considerable extent to which he adopted this text: most of Forbonnais's 1754 work can be found in English translation and in rearranged order dispersed across two of Postlethwayt's subsequent publications, namely *Great Britain's True System*, and his *Britain's Interest Explained and Improved*.<sup>39</sup> The detail of

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entries tend to contain political discussions and one can argue that the authors frequently quoted in those entries, were seen by Postlethwayt as authorities in the field.

<sup>35</sup> Of these Decker was probably most prominent, Child, Cary, Gee less so prominent (see van den Berg 2016). About Postlethwayt's borrowing from Hume see below.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix A for this list.

<sup>37</sup> For details see again van den Berg (2016) and n... below.

<sup>38</sup> He had already included some fragments in Postlethwayt (1749). For a fuller discussion of Postlethwayt's use of Cantillon's *Essay* see Cantillon (2015: 16-21).

<sup>39</sup> On its title page *True System* has 1757 as year of publication, but the book was in fact published on 6 December 1756 (see adverts in *Gazeteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 4751, of 6/12/1756, and more conclusively in *Public Advertiser*, issue 6907, of November 26, 1756). *British Commercial Interest* was in

Postlethwayt's borrowings from the *Elémens* can be seen in table 2. In quantitative terms, out of the 728 pages of the second edition of Forbonnais's two-volume work, he included at least 425 pages, or nearly 60%, across his two publications.<sup>40</sup> Even for a time when unacknowledged borrowing between authors was more common, such extensive verbatim reproduction was exceptional.

Remarkably, it appears that Postlethwayt, who since the publication of his *Dictionary* had become a household name in Britain and whose works were presumably well read,<sup>41</sup> got away with the wholesale plagiarism of a French work then enjoying considerable success on the continent. Even though it was clear to contemporaries, like the reviewer of *Britain's True System* in the *Monthly Review*, that Postlethwayt had made 'not a parsimonious use of many able Writers, but to whom he does not always remember to acknowledge his obligations', they did surely not realize the extent to which this was true and who some of the 'able Writers' in question were.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, much the same has to be said of virtually every subsequent scholar who commented on Postlethwayt's two later works.<sup>43</sup>

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turn published on 12 July 1757 (see adverts in *London Evening Post*, issue 4625, 28-30 June 1757 and in *Public Advertiser*, issue 7086, 12 July 1757). The somewhat earlier *Short State of the French Commerce*, published in May 1756, does not borrow from *Elémens*, but relies heavily on entries from Postlethwayt's own *Dictionary*.

<sup>40</sup> The count of 728 pages does not include the six pages of the *Avertissement* in volume one (which is also absent from *General Principles*). Postlethwayt did not borrow equally from both volumes of *Elémens*. Of the 381 pages of the first volume 294, or 77%, can be found in Postlethwayt (1757 a and b). For the second volume the figures are 131/347, or 38%.

<sup>41</sup> The author's reputation was noted, for example, in the review of *True System* in Smollett's *Critical Review*: 'Every body knows that Mr. Postlethwayt is the author of the Dictionary of Trade, a work which has been candidly received by the public as a national advantage' (Anonymous 1756: 433).

<sup>42</sup> *Monthly Review* (1757: 113). This reviewer was more discerning than the one in the *Critical Review*. That the reviewer nevertheless did not realize the full extent of Postlethwayt's borrowing practices is evident, for example, from the fact that he quotes Cantillon's estimates of the amount of money required in a nation (as reproduced in Cantillon 2015 [D286]) as if they were Postlethwayt's own words. It should be noted that two years afterwards this review of *True System* was printed in French translation in the *Journal de Commerce* (1759: 134-158), the same journal that made a special point of promoting the works of the Gournay circle (see above p.1-2). Thus it was made available to a public that might have been in a better position to recognize Cantillon's views in Postlethwayt's work. The same cannot really be said for the views of Forbonnais, because the reviewer had not paraphrased these at all closely. The review in the *Critical Review*, on the other hand, *did* include several extracts from *True System* that Postlethwayt had taken straight from *Elémens*. However, that review was not in turn taken over by a French journal.

<sup>43</sup> Below notes 58, 81, 119 we will have cause to point out some consequences of the fact that Postlethwayt's deceit was not noticed by modern students . **Also include Ashley 1897 (check); Monroe (152-3;185-6)**. In this sense the case of Postlethwayt's plagiarism of Forbonnais is very different from that of Cantillon because ever since Jevons (1888) it has widely known that fragments taken from Cantillon were present in Postlethwayt (1757a). For details of that case see Cantillon (2015: 16).

Table 2.

Forbonnais's <i>Elémens du commerce</i> 1754: <sup>2</sup>	2nd <sup>2</sup> edition	The <i>General Principles of Commerce</i> 1767:	Corresponding <sup>10</sup> <i>Elémens</i> pp.	In <sup>1</sup> Postelthwayt:	Corresponding <sup>2</sup> to <i>Elémens</i> pp.
I. <i>Du Commerce en général</i>	vol. 1, <sup>2</sup> pp.1-90	I. <i>Of Commerce in General</i>	pp. 1-30 .1-89	1757b, vol. 2, Dissertation XXXII, <sup>2</sup> 366-391	44-89
II. <i>De la concurrence</i>	91-103	II. <i>Of Rivalship in Trade</i>	30-34 91-103	1757a, Letter X, 233-240 <sup>2</sup>	91-103
III. <i>De l'agriculture</i>	104-261	III. <i>Of Agriculture</i>	34-55 104-171, 185-187, <sup>2</sup> 194-200	1757b, vol. 1, Dissertation IV, 126-142; IV, 199-125; III, 174-85;	104-142, 150-233
IV. <i>Des Manufactures du travail industriel</i>	261-342	IV. <i>Of Arts and Manufactures</i>	55-75 261-302; 308-342	1757b, vol. 2, Dissertation XXXIII, <sup>2</sup> 392-427	261-302, 308-342
V. <i>De la Navigation</i>	343-381	V. <i>Of Navigation</i>	75-87 343-381	1757b, vol. 2, Dissertation XXXVIII, <sup>2</sup> 318-338	343-381
VI. <i>Des Colonies</i>	vol. 2 <sup>2</sup> pp.1-50	VI. <i>Of Colonies</i>	87-101 .1-50	1757b, vol. 1, Dissertation VI, 153-167	21-49 <sup>2</sup>
VII. <i>Des Assurances</i>	50-74	VII. <i>Of Insurances</i>	102-148		
VIII. <i>Du Change</i>	74-117	VIII. <i>Of Exchange</i>	148-162 74-85, 91-117.		
IX. <i>De la Circulation de l'Argent</i>	117-226	IX. <i>Of the Circulation of money</i>	162-184 117-191	1757a, Letter XIV, 332-362 <sup>2</sup>	137-188
X. <i>Du Credit</i>	227-276	X. <i>Of Credit</i>	185-200 227-276	1757a, Letter XV, 373-86.	247-261, 266-276
XI. <i>Du Luxe</i>	276-309	XI. <i>Of Luxury</i>	200-210 276-309		
XII. <i>De la Balance du Commerce</i>	310-347	XII. <i>Of the Balance of Trade</i>	210-220 310-336, 339-347	1757b, vol. 2, Dissertation XXXVII, <sup>2</sup> 525-544	310-347

Just as remarkable is that a second printing of the English translation of the *Elémens*, probably in 1767, this time in its original order and even more complete, has equally escaped notice. This second printing was an anonymous work with the title *The General Principles of Commerce*, which Henry Higgs was to list as item 4055 in his *Bibliography of Economics* (Higgs 1935: 402).<sup>44</sup> It is something of a mystery why this rare work has never been recognized as being a translation of *Elémens*, because this identification is actually straightforward. A simple comparison between the chapter titles of the two works is sufficient to realize that the English work derives from the French one (see also table 2).<sup>45</sup> A closer look at the contents reveals that apart from chapter seven, ‘Of Insurances’, the *General Principles of Commerce* contains an almost verbatim translation of the second edition of Forbonnais’s 1754 publication. Most of the main body of the French work, that is, nearly 80%, is reproduced. The divergent content of chapter seven is explained in a footnote stating that the chapter provides ‘a bare abstract from [Nicolas Magens’s] *Essay on Insurances* [1753] with the addition of a few reflections from the judicious author of the *Elémens du Commerce*’ (Anonymous 1767: 102).

<sup>44</sup> In fact, due to lack of a title page the intended title of the work as a whole is not known. *The General Principles of Commerce* is actually the title of part one, pp. 1-220, of the book. Part two, pp. 221-358, has the separate title *The General State and Practice of Trade, particularly with regards to Great Britain and the British Colonies*. It breaks off mid-sentence on p.358. These deficiencies are identical for both known copies of the work. See below n.46.

<sup>45</sup> One possible reason why this correspondence has escaped notice is that the English work lacks a contents page. Unlike earlier generations of students, the present author had the benefit of an eTable of Contents provided by The Making of the Modern World database.

Given the incomplete nature of the *General Principles* and its rarity, Herbert Foxwell (1849-1936) was probably right to conjecture that the book was never published and in any case the offprints that were made will at most have had a limited circulation.<sup>46</sup> Hence, one might also be tempted to conclude that, beyond issues relating to the nature of the translation, (briefly considered below) the work is more a curiosity than being of real interest when assessing the possible impact of Forbonnais's writings in Britain. What changes this conclusion, however, is that a further comparison of this translation with what is found in the long extracts in Postlethwayt's fore-mentioned publications of a decade earlier leaves little doubt that there is a clear connection between the texts.

To be more precise, the parts that appeared in Postlethwayt's *Britain's Interest* are essentially the *same* translation as the counterparts found in the *General Principles*.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, the translated extracts found in *True System* differ to such an extent from corresponding parts of the 1767 text that it is hard to escape the conclusion that we are looking at two different translations. What may explain this curious fact? Since *True System* was published in December 1756, half a year before *Britain's Interest*, one may speculate that the former work used some preliminary translations of chapters 2, 9 and 10 of the *Elémens*. These were then redone in the translation on which both Postlethwayt 1757b and the 1767 printed text were based. Admittedly, since no manuscript of the translation has been found, this explanation must remain somewhat speculative.

Regardless of the precise truth of this matter, it is advisable to consider the translations found in Postlethwayt 1757a and b and Anonymous 1767 together. As will be argued below, the presence of large parts of the *Elémens* in the former two publications is much more relevant for assessing the significance of this French author's ideas within a British context than the more complete but obscure printing of the translation as *General Principles of Commerce* a decade later. But before addressing that issue, it is instructive to look briefly at some bibliographical aspects that those three works have in common.

First, unlike the contemporaneous French translations of economic works, which were quite explicit about their British sources, all three texts under consideration dissimulate their reliance on the French original in very similar manner. In *True System* the closest

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<sup>46</sup> Higgs (1935: 402) adopted most of a note that Foxwell wrote on the copy now in the Goldsmith library: 'this book appears to be of extraordinary rarity. We cannot trace any reference to it in any catalogue or source available. From the reference to "last year (1766)" on p. 326 [the same is found on page 146, RB] it would appear to have been printed in 1767. It is incomplete. I doubt if it was ever published. This copy comes from the famous library of Gibson Craig. He was a friend of McCulloch's & pretty interested in Economics. but he has not supplied any identification. I cannot suggest an author on internal grounds. The book is not of much ability'. Foxwell appears to have believed that there was a single extant copy, but in fact a second copy is present in the British Library (BLL01001387688). It too has a handwritten note, author unknown but presumable 19<sup>th</sup> century, which reads: 'Never published. Mr McCulloch states it as his belief that this is the only copy extant'. Perhaps the reason why Foxwell did not locate this second copy in the British Library was that on its spine it has the erroneous title 'Mill's Principles of Commerce' and it may have been catalogued as such at the time when Foxwell searched for other copies. Of course the fact that at least two copies, rather than one, have survived does not invalidate Foxwell's conclusion that it must have been very rare.

<sup>47</sup> In addition to many near identical choices in translation, omissions of passages are also frequently the same (see e.g. n. ....), though not always (see e.g. n. ....).

Postlethwayt comes to acknowledging a debt to a foreign work is at the very end of the book, where after having just plagiarized most of chapter 9 of *Elémens* he notes '[t]hese general Sentiments of an ingenious and impartial Foreigner agreeing with the tenor of this Tract, I have thought proper to add them in the Conclusion' (Postlethwayt 1757a:362). It is an odd and equivocal statement since it in no way reflects the extent of the borrowed passages in *several* preceding chapters. In its way of deceiving the reader, this passage is similar to what we find on page 46 of *General Principles*. Having reproduced that work in translation on *all* preceding pages, it is noted quite suddenly that 'M. de Fortbonnais' applied the preceding general views to France, and that 'as what he has said of this subject contains things of which the knowledge may be of service to this country, I shall continue here to insert the substance of his remarks, so far as they can be useful to us' (Anonymous 1767: 46).<sup>48</sup> A casual reader would not deduce from this statement that most of part one of the work was a straightforward translation of *Elémens*, and indeed one gets the impression that the formulation was designed to hoodwink the reader (successfully, one may add, judging by the fact that readers have every since been in the dark about the original French source).<sup>49</sup>

Second, the three texts offer essentially verbatim translations.<sup>50</sup> One finds relatively few

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<sup>48</sup> Inter alia, this passage shows that the editor of the 1767 text had worked out that the anonymous plagiarized author was one 'Fortbonnais'. 'Fortbonnais' is also mentioned on p.47, 52n. The spelling of the surname may provide a clue as to how the editor found out the identity of the French author. In the 1756 edition of Mauvillon one finds **this spelling ... this work was more widespread....** By contrast in 1757 Postlethwayt does not appear to have known the author's name. This is suggested by a passage at the end of the second volume of *Britian's Commercial Interest* (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 544) which reads: 'Every one will discern how far these sentiments of Mons. Melon, a judicious Frenchman, are applicable to these Kingdoms'. The implication may be that Postlethwayt guessed that Melon was the author of *Elémens*. This is odd because surely Postlethwayt will have come across passages in that work where Forbonnais criticized Melon. In fact, Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 329) quite intentionally appears to omit Forbonnais's criticism (1754, 364-5) of Melon's discussion of how the English treat their seamen. A related issue is whether Postlethwayt knew anything about the author of *Le négociant anglois*. A few times the latter is referred to as 'this ingenious Writer' and 'our French Author' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 87, 94, 109). It should be noted that in *Elémens* Forbonnais (1754, ii: 260) had referred the reader to a further discussion about paper credit and interest rates in the preliminary discourse of his *Négotiant anglois*. It seems that Postlethwayt followed up the reference because after plagiarizing the entire chapter in which this reference occurs in his 'Letter IV' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 73-86), except for the passage with the actual reference (see *ibid.* 81), he next proceeded to borrow from precisely this preliminary discourse in Letter V (*ibid.* 87-111). This suggests that Postlethwayt, even if he did not know the name of the author, was at least aware that Forbonnais 1753 and 1754 were by the same author.

<sup>49</sup> The fact that both texts nevertheless contain at least hints about the partial dependence on a foreign author, whilst remaining sufficiently vague about its extent, may perhaps be explained as a kind of insurance against charges of plagiarism. The 1767 text is furthermore disingenuous about its plagiarism by accusing other authors of just that: 'I shall at least have the advantage of being more candid than *some* of my predecessors who have compiled books on trade, in quoting the passages where I borrow from [...] them'. In three places in that chapter references to *Elémens* are indeed provided (pages 106, 139 and 140), but in view of the utter reliance on that work in all other chapters, the remark is either rather hypocritical, or, in case the author of the note was somebody different from the translator of the rest of the work, very ignorant. Also see p. 223 where the author clearly implies that the foregoing part one was his own original writing.

<sup>50</sup> In most places the translations are rather literal and this works fine where Forbonnais writes in a straightforward manner. But given the fact that Forbonnais's writing sometimes turns quite abstract and in other instances is more than a little florid, this occasionally leads to translations that are rather contorted.

additional comments, digressions or ‘free translations’. This is true especially for the 1767 text, which has little para-textual apparatus and generally stays close to the letter of *Elémens*. There are some exceptions, a more interesting instance of which is the rendering of Forbonnais’s broad-brush history of commerce at the beginning of the *Elémens*, in the passage where the Frenchman observes that soon after Columbus had discovered America, the French had in 1504 explored the North of the continent (Forbonnais 1754, i, 29). At that point the 1767 text interjects a paragraph neatly pointing out that between these two episodes of discovery, in 1497 John Cabot and his sons ‘did actually discover the whole coast of North America, from 68 degrees North, down to the South end of Florida’ for England (Anonymous 1767:11). Clearly this ‘correction’ concerned a crucial historical claim of the British that had been an official justification for their recent conquests in North America at the expense of France.<sup>51</sup> Generally, however, such attempts at supplementing the source text are rare in the 1767 text.

The many fragments in Postlethwayt (1757a and b) are a somewhat different case in that they were thoroughly rearranged and combined with other materials. Nevertheless the fragments themselves are more or less verbatim translations. To an extent, this may be said to be due to the lack of originality and talent on the part of the translator. That is to say, in France writers like Dangeul, Butel-Dumont and Forbonnais himself had enthusiastically engaged in ‘free translations’ of English works, seeing it clearly as their task to adapt, elaborate and improve upon the originals, which they considered mere ‘canvases’ upon which to make their own mark. In comparison the English translation of Forbonnais is much less ‘creative’. Instead of reformulating and molding the contents of the French text to make them fit his own purposes and British circumstances, Postlethwayt’s creative effort was largely limited to combining often long verbatim extracts from different prior authors in a new order in support his own specific arguments.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Reinert (2011: 154-5) about the use of accounts about John Cabot’s discoveries as a justification for the North-American campaigns during the seven years war. References to Cabot were frequent in British publications supporting the expansion of the colonial empire in North America. Anonymous (1767:11) quotes Anderson (1762, i, 321) as source for the claims about Cabot. It also adds to Forbonnais’s account that ‘the French had wormed themselves into that country [North America]’, but that ‘the last treaty of peace with France [of 1763] has added all that vast extent of land to the British empire in America’ (Anonymous 1767:15).

<sup>52</sup> Postlethwayt’s manner of working when rearranging extensive and unacknowledged fragments from *Elémens* is very similar to what he did with a, now presumably lost, manuscript version of Cantillon’s *Essay* both in his *Dictionary* (see Cantillon 2015: 20, 40-43) and -as we will see in more detail in section 4.1- in Postlethwayt (1757a). In Forbonnais’s case he certifiably stayed close to the original wordings, and one suspects that in Cantillon’s case he did the same, though one cannot be sure. Another important difference it is not known with confidence whether the Cantillon manuscript Postlethwayt had at his disposal was written in French or English. It is conceivable that the discovery of the ‘Postlethwayt translation’ of *Elémens*, reported here, can throw new light on this old question: if Cantillon’s words were translated from a French source then the translator may well have been the same as the person who translated *Elémens* into English. This hypothesis may perhaps be tested by means of a systematic comparison between on the one hand the English translation of *Elémens* in Postlethwayt (1757a and b) and Anonymous (1767) to its French source, and on the other hand the English version of Cantillon’s *Essay* in Postlethwayt (1751-5, 1757a) to the French versions. At first glance, the English translation of *Elémens*

Third, some brief comments may be made about the translation of particular French terms. As recent commentators have highlighted, Forbonnais had an aptitude for coining neologisms, which entered into his own and, due to subsequent translations, into other European languages (Théré and Rohrbasser 2011, Carpi 2014). The reviewer of *True System* who noted ‘the many literal novelties our Author [Postlethwayt] has thought to patronize’ may unwittingly have been referring to some renderings of Forbonnais’s neologisms into English (Anonymous 1757: 111). For example, Forbonnais’s frequent use of the word *population* was translated on several occasions as ‘population’, a term that was not yet common in English.<sup>53</sup> Another favourite word of Forbonnais *concurrence*, which he used to refer to both ‘competitive struggle’ and to ‘competitive dominance’, is mostly translated in Postlethwayt (1757a) with ‘rivalship’, despite that fact that Postlethwayt uses the more modern ‘competition’ quite frequently in the same work in passages that do not depend on the French text.<sup>54</sup> Whether this differentiated use of the terms ‘rivalship’/‘competition’ is a deliberate choice can be doubted, since Postlethwayt had used both terms more or less as synonyms in his *Dictionary*.<sup>55</sup> In any case, what is translated with ‘rivalship’ in Postlethwayt (1757a) is rendered as ‘competition’ on a number of occasions in Anonymous (1767). More straightforward is the translation of the term *entrepreneur*, which according to contemporary English usage, and Postlethwayt’s own earlier practice in his *Dictionary*, is rendered as ‘undertaker’.<sup>56</sup>

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appears to stay much closer to its French original than the English version of Cantillon’s writings is to the *Essai* –supporting my hypothesis that the (missing) manuscript Postlethwayt used differed significantly from the known French versions. However, someone with the appropriate skills in comparative linguistics may be able to provide further insights.

<sup>53</sup> See note 18 above. To be more precise, in Postlethwayt (1757a) the term *population* occurs only once (p. 355, corresponding to Forbonnais 1754, ii, 176). In other places *population* is translated with the more traditional term ‘populousness’ (Postlethwayt 1757a: 234, 341, 350, corresponding to Forbonnais 1754, i, 93, ii, 152 and ii, 167 respectively). Interestingly, these instances are replaced in the ‘improved’ 1767 translation with ‘population’ (respectively 1767: 31, 173, 177). Postlethwayt (1757b) too, which as noted was essentially the same translation as Anonymous (1767) has ‘population’ five times (1757b, i, 121, 122, ii, 425, 533, 534; cf. resp. 1767: 54 (twice), 78, 74, 214, 215; corresponding to resp. Forbonnais 1754, i, 196, 197, 353, 337, ii, 326, 327). Only once does Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 325) have ‘populousness’ where Anonymous (1767: 78) has ‘population’. Still, on a number of other occasions the 1767 text (as well as Postlethwayt 1757b) translates *population* also with ‘populous(ness)’ or ‘numbers’ of men.

<sup>54</sup> For example, in Postlethwayt (1757a) ‘competition’ is used 18 times, but only in two cases this concerns passages taken from Forbonnais. These two occurrences (Postlethwayt 1757a: 340, 342) relate to the, frankly odd, notion of Forbonnais that money and goods are ‘competing’ in the circular flow –although perhaps the word *concurrence* allows for the more understandable meaning that both appear ‘concurrently’ in trade. In any case the translator(s) clearly struggled when confronted with the following statement (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 150): ‘*Ainsi nous définirons la circulation compose, une concurrence inégale des denrées & de leurs signes, en faveur des signes*’. In Postlethwayt (1757a: 340) this is translated as: ‘We will, therefore, define the composite Circulation, an unequal Competition or Rivalship of the Commodities and their Signs, in Favour of their Signs.’ In Anonymous (1767: 172) the translation is: ‘We will therefore define the compound circulation to be, an unequal competition of commodities and of their signs, in favour of the signs’.

<sup>55</sup> See e.g. Postlethwayt (1751-5, ii, 828) where Postlethwayt argues that there is no strong ‘rivalship and competition’ between Britain and the United Provinces. Of the two, the term ‘rivalship’ seems to be used more frequently in the *Dictionary*.

<sup>56</sup> In the *Dictionary* many occurrences of ‘undertaker’ were in passages that were taken from Cantillon (see Cantillon 2015: 121). However, he also used the term in passages he apparently wrote himself, where interestingly enough, this actor is seen as an ‘innovator’. See e.g. below p. For a more detailed discussion of this point see van den Berg (2015).

Similarly, the expression *classes mitoyennes* (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 334) is translated almost conventionally as ‘middling classes’ in Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 538) and Anonymous (1767: 217).<sup>57</sup> One could extend these comparisons to a number of other translations of terms, but let us instead turn to the question how Postlethwayt turned his borrowings from the extensive fragments from *Elémens* to his own purposes.

#### 4. Postlethwayt’s use of fragments

In order to get an understanding of how Postlethwayt utilized the writings of his French contemporary, first in *Great Britain’s True System* and then in *Britain’s Commercial Interest*, it is instructive to consider not just which precise excerpts he used. In addition, one should form an idea of the context, that is, quite literally the surrounding text, and also more figuratively, that is, the purposes and wider arguments Postlethwayt put forward, in support of which he plied his, mostly undisclosed, sources. For this reason it is best to discuss Postlethwayt’s two books in turn, since the first dealt with the narrower theme of public finance, while the second was a wide-ranging work, more akin to a general treatise of commerce.

##### 4.1 *Great Britain’s True System*

*Great Britain’s True System*, published on 6 December 1756, is a long-winded book of over 500 pages that has as its central topic the question “how to pay for the war”? E.A.J. Johnson, one of the few modern students to discuss this work in any detail, described it as ‘an attempt to apply a theoretical mosaic to a contemporary problem of public finance’ (Johnson 1937: 195). The image of a mosaic is very apt since, as was indicated, Postlethwayt’s method of working consisted to a large extent in joining, sometimes ill-fitting, pre-existing pieces of text together. Johnson further states that these pieces consisted of ‘portions of Decker, Cantillon, Locke, Davenant, Forbonnais, and Hume’ (*ibid.*). This, however, underestimates the extent to which just two authors, Cantillon and Forbonnais, supplied the main framework for Postlethwayt’s ‘theoretical mosaic’.<sup>58</sup> The intriguing recombination of the ideas from these two authors in Postlethwayt (1757a) can, to an extent, be appreciated by considering the list of corresponding fragments in table 3.

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<sup>57</sup> Lefebvre (2011: 234) argues that Forbonnais’s usage of the term *classes mitoyennes* was inspired by the English notion of middling people/rank/station/sort. Such terms were indeed frequently used in Britain at the time for an already recognized social stratum (see e.g. Hunt 1996) and hence the translation into English would have been very straightforward.

<sup>58</sup> The main reason for this underestimation is that Johnson mostly relied on the explicit references in Postlethwayt’s book. Hence he was aware of the more limited, but acknowledged, borrowing from *Le négociant anglois* (Postlethwayt 1757a: 87 n; cf. n. 71 below) and not of the much more extensive plagiarism from *Elémens*. In addition, even though Johnson knew from Jevons’s work that fragments taken from Cantillon are present in the work he makes no effort to identify these pieces.

Table 3. Extended fragments in *Great Britain's True System* taken from earlier authors

	Pages	Of which pages ...	are taken from...
An Introductory Discourse	i-lxv		
Considerations about German dominions	lxvi-cl		
Letter I Of raising the supplies, by encreasing the Public Debts, considered	1-24		
Letter ii A short enquiry [about raising supplies within the year 'necessary to carry on the War with Vigor']	24-54		
Letter III Of raising the supplies monthly [...] and of the Effects thereof in the general Circulation of Commerce	55-72	56-65	Cantillon D262-D295; D304-D306
Letter IV Further Considerations on the Nature of public credit	73-86	73-86	Forbonnais 1754, ii, 247-276
Letter V The Opinion* that some Foreigners entertain of the National Debt	87-111	87-109	Forbonnais 1753b, civ-clxiv
Letter VI How the Public Revenue might have been constituted	112-142	125-128	Hutcheson 1714
Letter VII How the raising the Supplies... may be conducive to lower the Price of our manufactures	143-185	148-158	Cantillon D78-D105; D64-D75; D186-D200
		159-	Decker 1743:
Letter VIII How far the Price of Things may have arisen	186-203		
Letter IX Of the Encrease and Decrease of Real Money in a state	204-232	204-210	Cantillon D345-D375;
		213-217	Hume 1752
		217-219	Cantillon D377-D382
Letter X Of Rivalship in Trade	233-271	233-240	Forbonnais 1754, i, 91-103
Letter XI Further Observations on Rivalship in Trade	272-304		
Letter XII How Encrease in Debts will affect the Landed Interest	305-312		
Letter XIII The Practicability of raising the supplies	313-331	321-3	Davenant ...
Letter XIV The Effect of a quick Circulation between Money and Commodities further considered: upon which Principle depend the Ease and Practicability of Raising the Supplies within the Year.	332-362	332-362	Forbonnais 1754, ii, 137-188

Postlethwayt's book must be seen in the context of the debates over war finance that had erupted with the outbreak of war in Europe in May 1756. Some months before Postlethwayt's contribution, Francis Fauquier had published his plan for 'raising the Money *within* the year' (Fauquier 1756: 38), by means of a house tax, which was largely inspired by Matthew Decker's *Serious Considerations*.<sup>59</sup> Fauquier shared with Decker and previous commentators and politicians, like Archibald Hutcheson, a disapproval of the prevailing funding system whereby any new government borrowing was secured by the introduction of specific new taxes earmarked for the annual raising of sums to cover interest payments on the new debt.<sup>60</sup> Instead of an accumulation of such perpetual taxes

<sup>59</sup> This much-read work originally published in 1743, had by 1756 reached a seventh edition.

<sup>60</sup> Postlethwayt had discussed the funding system at length in his *Dictionary*, particularly in the entry 'Funds' (I, 875-883), displaying a typical thorough knowledge of the contemporary British literature on the topic. Besides long quotations from John Bernard, Matthew Decker, Erasmus Philips and others, it is worth noting the extract taken from Andrew Hooke's *An Essay on the National Debt and National Capital* (1750). This work Postlethwayt noted had only recently 'fell into my way'. For its importance see Hoppit 1996: 520). An early advocate of 'funding within the year' was Archibald Hutcheson (c.1660-1740) whose letter on this topic addressed to the King, of 14 January 1714, Postlethwayt quoted both in the *Dictionary* entry 'Interest' (i, 997) and in *True System* (125-8). For Hutcheson see Dale (2004).

to finance an ever-greater national debt, these opponents advocated ‘raising the money within the year’, that is, financing government expenditure with one-off taxes and no additional government borrowing.

An obvious objection against such proposals, especially in times of steeply increasing war expenditure, was that abstaining from further borrowing would require massive ‘within the year’ increases in taxation.<sup>61</sup> Joseph Massie’s pamphlet of *Observations* on Fauquier’s proposal made this point in a manner that was pertinent to Postlethwayt’s contribution. Massie’s principal argument against the proposal was that a greatly increased taxation would have significant depressing effects on the economy:

If [...] the Quantity of Money now circulating in the different Counties of *England* and *Wales*, be drawn out of them by new Taxes much faster than it is returned to them by the Navy, Army, and the general Balance of Trade; the Rents, Taxes, Produce and Manufactures of those Counties must of Necessity sink in Value [...] This is a very melancholy Prospect, and such a one as I am persuaded neither Mr. Fauquier, nor those who think his Scheme easily practicable have yet figured to themselves (Massie 1756:24).

Massie’s argument was based on the perception that the purchasing power of ‘Buyers in general’ was equivalent to the quantity of money in circulation available to those buyers and hence that a reduction in this quantity would cause the prices of all kinds of necessaries and incomes to fall.<sup>62</sup> Even though Postlethwayt mentions neither Fauquier’s nor Massie’s short pamphlets, it appears that it was the latter’s objection on the grounds of the perceived negative effects on money circulation that constituted the immediate theoretical challenge taken up in *Great Britain’s True System*.<sup>63</sup> That is to say, the central message of this work, developed over many pages, is that the negative impact on the circulation of money and economic activity of ‘raising supplies within the year’ would be very moderate while by contrast, the alternative of extensive additional government borrowing would have severe detrimental effects on economic activity.

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<sup>61</sup> This was clearly not politically expedient. As Browning (1971: 347-8) explains, at the outbreak of the seven years war plans that had no recourse to substantial borrowing had little chance of actually being adopted, ‘there was simply no real debate within the government [...] because the politicians believed they had no choice: Britain had reached a level in tax revenues beyond which the government dared not go, and only borrowing remained an option for raising needed funds’.

<sup>62</sup> Massie (1756: 23) offered the following supply-of-goods-demand-by-money explanation: ‘when Men in general have but little Money to go to Market with, they can but pay little for what they want; and those who have Corn, Flesh-meat, Butter, Cheese, Cloth, or any other Thing to sell, must either sell them accordingly, or not at all, as it is the Ability of the Buyers in general, and not the Will of the Sellers, that fixes the Prices of the Necessaries and Conveniences of Life’. This kind of argument about the determination of market prices was not particularly original since variants can be found in the English commercial literature from at least the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. For a recent discussion see Aspromourgos (2009: 103-106, and esp. p. 301, n.62). Note however that Massie generalizes from the meeting of money and goods in a concrete market place at a single moment to the general price level (to use a modern, somewhat deceptive term). This jumps either ignores the repeated use of money and hence its velocity, not to mention the existence of credit, or implicitly makes rigid assumptions about the same. The argument is reminiscent of Malthus (1800).

<sup>63</sup> Massie’s pamphlet was published in July 1756, or shortly before (it was reviewed in the July issue of the *Monthly Review*, p. 89). The fact that we can see the passage quoted in the main text above paraphrased in Postlethwayt (1757a: 68) indicates he knew Massie’s pamphlet.

To make the first point Postlethwayt turned for theoretical support to Cantillon, reprinting fragments, previously plagiarized in his *Dictionary* entries ‘Cash’ and ‘Circulation’. Even though the latter had written very little about taxation, let alone war finance, Postlethwayt turned his analysis to the presumed effects of increased taxation on ‘the general Circulation of Commerce’, the issue Massie worried about, stating that such effects depended primarily ‘upon the Celerity of Circulation’ (Postlethwayt 1757a: 55, 56). This assertion was followed by a detailed and stylized account of the processes of the circulation of money and incomes in an economy, taken straight from Cantillon.<sup>64</sup>

What will have appealed to Postlethwayt in this account was that Cantillon discussed point for point the factors that determined the amount of cash required in an economy for the annual payments for goods and incomes.<sup>65</sup> Several of these factors could produce an increased ‘celerity’, that is velocity, of money circulation that would compensate any temporary reductions in cash in the economy. Additionally, the reliable usage of mutual private credit, and solid public credit, would supplement any shortage of cash:

it may rationally be inferred that Punctuality, Integrity, and Confidence in Dealings in a commercial State, augment those Kinds of trafficable Barthers by Evaluation; and, in consequence thereof, make Money go farther in Circulation: And Experience tells us, that when either the private or the public Credit is injured, the general Circulation in such a Nation is clogged, and Money, in consequence thereof, grows scarcer . The Bank of England as well as the private Bankers of this Kingdom, are a great Aid and Assistance to the general Circulation (Postlethwayt 1757a: 65-6).

This passage was adopted from Cantillon, as it had occurred in the *Dictionary* entry ‘Circulation’, but with some subtle alterations,<sup>66</sup> led to Postlethwayt’s own conclusion that

[t]hese Considerations seem to confirm, that by Means of the Quantity of hard Money in the Nation, according to the lowest Estimate that has ever been made thereof of late Years; together with the conjunctive Aid of such a degree of solid Paper-Credit, that this Nation may always command, while the Public Credit shall be established upon the Foundation that is hereby humbly aimed at; we need not be under any Apprehension but we may be able to raise the Supplies within

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<sup>64</sup> Four years earlier, in 1752, Postlethwayt had used more extensive fragments from the same chapters in Cantillon’s work in his *Dictionary* entries ‘Cash’ and ‘Circulation’. The pages 56 to 65 in Postlethwayt (1757a) correspond to D262-D295 and D304-D306 as reproduced in Cantillon (2015: 210-34 and 240-44). As can be seen from table 3, he also re-used fragments earlier printed in the entries ‘Labour’ (D64-D75, D78-D105, D186-D200) and ‘Money’ (D345-D375, D377-D382) as reproduced in Cantillon (2015: 88-112, 158-166, 264-286). The variations between the two versions are in most cases minor. The change discussed in note 66 is an exception.

<sup>65</sup> Humphrey (1993: 6-7), who calls Cantillon ‘the foremost velocity theorist of the eighteenth century’, lists no fewer than 13 arguments that enter ‘his velocity function’. Most of these are found in the fragments Postlethwayt plagiarized in his *Dictionary*, though some, such as hoarding and uncertain expectations, are not included again in Postlethwayt (1757a). The most important for Postlethwayt in the latter work are frequency of payment, size of payments and trade credit.

<sup>66</sup> One noteworthy difference compared to the passage that occurred in the *Dictionary* (see Cantillon 2015: 242-3, D305-6) is that the phrase ‘when either the private or the public Credit is injured’ replaces the simpler ‘when credit fails’. This may be considered a subtle move by Postlethwayt to align passage towards his subsequent treatment of public credit, for which he borrows from Forbonnais, but which had not been the focus of Cantillon’s analysis in this part of his work.

the Year, without the Risque of being disappointed in the Attempt (*ibid.* 66).

In other words, any concern for deflationary effects of one-off taxes, however considerable they may be, on prices, incomes and economic activity could be laid to rest as long as private and public credit were sound.

For this reason the consideration of the ‘nature of public credit’ formed the topic of Postlethwayt’s next two chapters. These, as can be seen from table 3, consisted almost entirely of straightforward translations from Forbonnais. The first, Letter IV, adopted a large part of the chapter *Du Credit* from *Elémens*.<sup>67</sup> This discussion, Postlethwayt argued would ‘corroborate the Necessity of introducing the Measures proposed’ (*ibid.* 73). And indeed, Forbonnais provided a whole list of reasons why excessive government borrowing would hurt public credit and economic activity.

The first seemed to give explicit support to Postlethwayt’s call for raising funds for the war ‘within the year’: excessive borrowing by government would raise ‘the Load of Charges it accumulates or perpetuates’ which would ‘increase a greater Burden to the People, than an Increase of Imposts only temporary’ (*ibid.* 78).<sup>68</sup> The next five arguments were that increased government borrowing (ii) sustained an idle class of rentiers; (iii) was bound to raise interest rates in the economy; (iv) would make the nation more dependent on foreign creditors; (v) would draw capitals from more uncertain, but productive employments; (vi) would make exports less competitive, because ‘public Debts becoming Money’ would increase the money supply, raising prices of domestically produced goods relative to foreign ones.<sup>69</sup>

Forbonnais had been at some pains to explain that the final argument about ‘Circulating-paper’ raising the money supply did not imply a contradiction with the third one. Even ‘if Reductions of Interest have been seen in Countries where Paper-money has been multiplied without ceasing, nothing ought to be inferred from thence contrary to these Principles, because those Reductions were not then quite voluntary’.<sup>70</sup> Here Forbonnais, of course, meant Britain and for a more extended discussion of the ‘forced reductions’ engineered across the Channel he referred his readers to the preliminary discourse of his *Négotiant Anglois* (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 260). Postlethwayt omitting this reference from his translation (p.81) went one better and made this discussion his next chapter, i.e. ‘letter V’.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> To be precise, Postlethwayt took the section that dealt with public credit, that is, starting from the subsection titled *credit public, deuxième branche* (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 247). The plagiarism continues until the end of that chapter (*ibid.* 276) only leaving out a passage (*ibid.* 261 bottom to 266 top) that explains details of the operation of banks and their influence of the quantity of ‘signs’ in circulation.

<sup>68</sup> Postlethwayt (1757a: 78) translated from Forbonnais (1754, ii, 254-5): ‘*la pesanteur des charges qu’il accumule ou qu’il perpétue [...] plus onéreuse au peuple, qu’une augmentation d’impôt qui seroit passagere*’

<sup>69</sup> Postlethwayt (1757a: 78-80) translated from Forbonnais (1754, ii, 255-9).

<sup>70</sup> Postlethwayt (1757a: 81) translated from Forbonnais (1754, ii, 260).

<sup>71</sup> This source Postlethwayt *did* acknowledge at the beginning of the section with the somewhat deceptive title: ‘*Letter V. The Opinion that some Foreigners\* entertain of the national Debts and the public Credit of this Kingdom*’. The asterisk pointed to the following footnote: ‘\*Le Négotiant Anglois, ou Traduction Libre

Postlethwayt's borrowing of Forbonnais's views on public credit in both *Elémens* and *Négotiant Anglois*, in order to highlight the *dangers* of excessive government borrowing, is perhaps somewhat surprising in the light of recent examinations of the Frenchman's position. Sonenscher (2007: 179-189), Charles (2008: 191-3) and Hont (2008:267-74) all make the point, in slightly different ways, that Forbonnais, and the Gournay circle generally, were 'strongly in favor of the institution of public credit in France on the English model (the Bank of England)'. In this context, the intellectual challenge, taken up most directly by Forbonnais, was to counter David Hume's negative assessments of the effects of public credit and paper money. Especially in a memorandum to French ministers, written a little after completing his *Eléments*, he explicitly warned against Hume's misgivings about modern British state finance.<sup>72</sup>

It is an interesting question why in *True System* Postlethwayt chose to use a combination of arguments taken from Cantillon and Forbonnais, rather than from Hume, to support his views about public finance. Postlethwayt had read Hume's *Political Discourses* soon after their publication and started including fragments from latter's essay 'Of Public Credit' within a year.<sup>73</sup> However, being quoted by Postlethwayt, especially in his *Dictionary*, which he considered as a compilation of a *range* of authoritative opinion on any topic relating to commerce, did not necessarily equate with approval. Occasionally, Postlethwayt ventured to criticize learned authors. And after quoting the Scottish philosopher at some length in the entry 'Debt, National' he did just that:

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

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du Livre intitulè [sic]: *The British Merchant*. See the preliminary Discourse thereto affixed' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 87). The whole following section, pp. 87-109, is taken almost verbatim from *Negotiant anglois*, although in two places Postlethwayt omits passages; he leaves out most of pp. cxv to cxix, as well as calculations on pp. cxliii-cxliv.

<sup>72</sup> See Sonenscher (2007: 183-4) according to whom Forbonnais advised that warnings about public credit of Britons like Hume and Bolingbroke 'were best seen as Tory jeremiads (or possibly even black propaganda) and not worth taking into consideration in French discussions of how far it might be appropriate to match the British funding system'. Charles (2008: 192) and Hont (2008: 269-70) show how Hume's French translator Le Blanc used the same tactic as Forbonnais of associating Hume writings with Toryism and with Bolingbroke's criticism of Whig finance. Of course this does not mean that Hume's *Political Discourses* were badly received by the Gournay circle. The opposite was true. As Alimento (2014b: 1060-1) convincingly shows, reading Hume's *Discourses* sometime between August 1752 and June 1753 had a formative influence on Forbonnais, judging by differences between the manuscript translation of *Négotiant Anglois* and the printed version. However, as Hont points out, French readers, Forbonnais included, found it difficult to cope with Hume's ambiguity about aspects of modern commercial society and statecraft: 'Hume seemed both to endorse foreign trade and highlight its self-defeating character. He seemed to praise luxury but to take the opposite, anti-commercial, side over a number of closely related issues' (Hont 2008: 267).

<sup>73</sup> Hume's *Political Discourses* was published in England at the beginning of March 1752. The first *Dictionary* issue that quotes 'Of Public Credit' was published in the last week of October of that year. Three entries, 'Credit, Public', 'Debt, National' and 'Paper Credit' contain extended quotations from that essay.

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).

Thus to Postlethwayt Hume's warnings about 'the instability of the public credit' in Britain were too extreme.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps for this reason he found Forbonnais's cautious approach to public credit more attractive. What was seen in the French political context, with its less developed public finance and greater political sensitivity on these matters, as a cautious advocacy of public credit, could pass in Britain, with its more advanced and widely accepted financial institutions, as a more conservative warning against its excessive use.

Another reason why the combination of the ideas of Cantillon and Forbonnais is fascinating is that Postlethwayt decided to appropriate a large part of the crucial chapter IX of *Elémens* titled *De la Circulation de l'Argent*, as the concluding chapter of his book.<sup>75</sup> Noting that he used 'these general Sentiments of an ingenious and impartial Foreigner' as his conclusion because they 'agreed with the [overall] Tenor of this Tract' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 362), Postlethwayt seemed to imply that Cantillon's analysis of circular flow and Forbonnais' views on finance were at least to some extent compatible. This was not at all far-fetched: especially, chapter IX of *Elémens* displays clear parallels between the two men's monetary theories. In fact, even though Postlethwayt could have no more than suspected this, it seems possible that Forbonnais had benefited from studying Cantillon's *Essai* in manuscript when developing his own monetary ideas.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> It is true that in Postlethwayt (1757a: 213-17) he did again include a fragment from 'Of Public Credit'. However, he also dissociated himself from Hume by introducing this quotation with the odd remark 'the ingenious Mr. Hume seems to entertain a *more* favourable Opinion of our Debts than he ought' (ibid. 213, emphasis added). Only at the end of the passage he acknowledged that Hume's arguments lent support to his views: 'One of the greatest Evils we find, according to this learned Gentleman, that attends our public Debts, is most certainly the Expence, which the Taxes occasioned thereby, superadd to our Commodities, and the unspeakable Injury the Nation hereby sustains, in Regard to its commercial Concerns with other States: But to resume former Considerations in *our own* Chain of Reasoning' (ibid. 217, emphasis added). In the very next sentence he resumes not his own but Cantillon's reasoning! In this way Postlethwayt dissociates Hume's views from what he considers his own (i.e. Cantillon's and Forbonnais's) views.

<sup>75</sup> Sonenscher (2007) and Charles (2008: 193) points out, this chapter was subsequently turned into the entry '*Espèces*' in the fifth volume of d'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (thereby giving that publication an entry with content that was not dissimilar to the entry 'Cash' in Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*, that relied on Cantillon). In volume three of the *Encyclopédie* Forbonnais had already contributed the entries 'Assurances', 'Change', 'Colonies' and 'Commerce', edited versions of which formed chapters VII, VIII and I, of *Elémens*.

<sup>76</sup> Postlethwayt could scarcely have known the French circumstances of the publication of Cantillon's *Essai*. But as a prominent member of Gournay's coterie, within which the French version of Cantillon's work was prepared for publication, Forbonnais may well have had access to the manuscript of the *Essai*. In Cantillon (2015:14) I argue that there is scant evidence for the view that multiple manuscripts of Cantillon's *Essai* circulated in French literary circles between 1734 and 1755, when it first appeared in print. Instead my conjecture is that there existed just a single complete French manuscript, which was in Mirabeau's possession from the later 1730s, from which he had made extracts for his personal studies, and which was subsequently handed over to Gournay, or one of his protégées, in about 1753. From this moment onwards the *Essai* would presumably have been studied more widely, that is, by members of the Gournay circle. Along these lines Sabbagh (2016) argues that an influence of Cantillon's ideas can be perceived in Dangeul (1754) and that this contradicts my statement that no such influence is found in French works published prior to 1755. For clarity, I should of course have exempted the writings of authors belonging to

One has to be careful on this point because, as other commentators have noted, Forbonnais may have developed several of his views in this chapter as a critique of Hume to whom he would thereby be intellectually indebted. Also, the monetary theories of Cantillon and Hume exhibit notorious similarities, to such an extent that historically they have often been confused (see van den Berg 2012; Cantillon 2015: 34, 36). Nevertheless, some of the parallels between the analysis Forbonnais offers of the real effect of increases in the money supply are very reminiscent of Cantillon. That is to say, like the latter Forbonnais offered a more sophisticated analysis than Hume of the stickiness and sequential pattern of changes in prices and wages that would take place upon an inflow of money, as the result of positive trade balances. Such delays would be crucial for non-neutral monetary effects, which in principle would render success in trade far less self-defeating than Hume had suggested. Whether or not Forbonnais took the lead from Cantillon, the fact that Postlethwayt combined the works of both men in the same publication was something both fortuitous and unique.<sup>77</sup>

## 4.2 Britain's Commercial Interest

Within half a year Postlethwayt followed up *True System* with *Britain's Commercial Interest*, a two-volume work divided into 37 'dissertations' that were much more extensive than his previous offering, both in size (it weighs in at just over 1100 octavo

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the Gournay circle, since possible traces of Cantillon's ideas in their writings are consistent with my main conjecture that there were no multiple French manuscript copies that were widely read for two decades, but a sole French manuscript (now preserved in Rouen). The question who precisely edited the first print edition of the *Essai* remains open.

<sup>77</sup> The topic of this paper does not allow me to put forward a detailed case to argue for a substantial influence of Cantillon on Forbonnais's ideas -something I think is quite plausible. Suffice it here to consider this single comparison between, left, Cantillon (2015: 266 [E348]) and, right, Forbonnais (1754a, ii: 154):

Si l'augmentation vient des riches Mines d'or ou d'argent dans un Etat, le Propriétaire de ces Mines, les Entrepreneurs, les Fondateurs, les Affineurs, Mineurs, ne manqueront pas d'augmenter leurs dépenses à proportion de leurs gains. Ils consommeront dans leurs ménages plus de viande, & plus de vin ou de bière, qu'ils ne faisoient, ils s'accoutumeront à porter de meilleurs habits, de plus beau linge, et avoir des Maisons & d'autres commodités d'une plus grande propreté et Convenance. Par conséquent ils donneront de l'emploi à plusieurs Artisans qui n'avoient pas auparavant tant d'ouvrages, & qui par la même raison augmenteront un peu leur dépense à leur Tour; toute cette augmentation de dépense en viande, en vin, en laine, diminuera nécessairement la part des autres habitans de l'Etat qui ne se sentent pas d'abord des richesses des Mines en question. Les altercations du Marché, ou la demande pour la le vin, la laine, &c. est plus forte qu'à l'ordinaire, ne manquera pas d'en hausser les prix.

L'argent qui vient de la possession des mines peut n'être pas mis dans le commerce de l'état par diverses causes. Il est entre les mains d'un petit nombre d'hommes; ainsi quant même ils useroient de l'augmentation de leur faculté de dépenser, la concurrence de l'argent ne sera accrue qu'en faveur d'un petit nombre des denrées. La consommation des choses les plus nécessaires à la vie n'augmente pas avec la richesse d'un homme; ainsi la circulation de ce nouvel argent commencera par les denrées le moins utiles; & passera lentement aux autres qui le sont davantage.

pages) and in coverage. Similar in scope to *Elémens*, it deals with agricultural improvement, colonial affairs, maritime and commercial policies, fisheries, arts and manufactories and much more. As can be seen from table 4 (in appendix B), the borrowings from the French work are concentrated in a few places. In the first volume Postlethwayt included in four consecutive ‘dissertations’ most of Forbonnais’s long chapter on agriculture, followed by most of his chapter on colonies. In the second volume he plagiarized the chapters on navigation, part of the first chapter of *Elémens* and the chapter on manufactures and finally he appropriated the concluding chapter of Forbonnais’s work as the conclusion of his own work.

It is especially this selection of borrowings in *Britain’s Commercial Interest* that reveal the wide agreement between the Postlethwayt’s views and those of his French contemporary about the content and method of the ‘art and science of the administration of *political commerce*’.<sup>78</sup> To support this point it will be useful to compare some of the views borrowed from *Elémens* with ideas the Englishman had expressed in his previous publications, especially his *Dictionary*, which, as we have seen, predated his acquaintance with Forbonnais’s work. It may be said that Postlethwayt in effect invited such comparisons when noting in the preface of volume 2 that ‘these political Dissertations [of *Britain’s Commercial Interest*] are corroborating and extending many parts of what is urged in my *Dictionary of Commerce*’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, iv).

The place to start is ‘dissertation’ 32, entitled ‘Some general maxims regarding the advancement of national commerce’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii: 366-91). This reproduced Forbonnais’s general reflections about the ‘political commerce’ as set out in the introductory chapter of *Elémens*. The Frenchman had in his turn modeled his chapter on the preface and first chapter of volume one of Charles King’s *The British Merchant*, a work that Postlethwayt too had used extensively in his *Dictionary* (see above p. 12).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> This is Postlethwayt’s (1757b, ii, 368) translation of Forbonnais’s (1754, i, 48) phrase ‘*l’art & la science de l’administration du commerce politique*’. On the significance of the term *commerce politique* see Steiner (2011).

<sup>79</sup> Both presumably used the 1743 edition of *The British Merchant*. The adaptation of the structure, and part of the content, of Charles King’s publication in the first chapter of *Elémens* is quite explicit. Sonenscher (2007: 179-80) strongly emphasizes the influence of Melon, and this is quite true for the first pages of chapter one of *Elémens*. However, Forbonnais then proceeded with a brief overview of the commercial history of nations since antiquity (Forbonnais 1754, I, 11-44), which was loosely based on King’s *Preface*. Next Forbonnais reflected on the lessons of such *histoire du commerce* and showed how these could be summed up by ‘nine principles that the English, that is to say the wisest people in [matters of] trade, have adopted in their books whereby to judge the utility or the disadvantage of a trade’ (*ibid.* 1754, I, 52). Postlethwayt (1757b: 370) translated this sentence somewhat more vaguely as: ‘I shall observe there are nine maxims, which our English commercial laws have adopted’. More specifically, however, Forbonnais’s nine principles reworked the nine principles given in chapter one, volume one of *The British Merchant*. This text had been written by Sir Theodore Janssen (c.1658-1748) and was first published as *General Maxims in Trade* (1713), a separate tract that was not part of the periodical publication called *The British Merchant*. It was only due to the editorial decision of Charles King that Janssen’s maxims ‘were given the *place d’honneur* in the 1721 edition of the *British Merchant*’ (Johnson 1937: 147). Thus in his chapter Postlethwayt plagiarized a French text that had reworked an earlier English text. However, Janssen is salutary example of why it is sometimes hazardous to talk about the original nationality of economic discourses: although he made his career in finance and politics in Britain, Janssen was born in Angoulême,

The principal lesson Forbonnais drew from the principles of ‘the wisest people in [matters of] trade’ was that one could not state generally that unobstructed trade was in principle always beneficial to the nation. ‘Political commerce’ revolved around the ‘fundamental maxim that there is a beneficial national trade, and a national trade which is not so’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 368; Forbonnais 1754, i, 49). Establishing in what cases trade was beneficial to the nation and in what cases harmful was a complicated art and science. Some general criteria were (a) that normally the freest possible domestic economic activity should be encouraged; (b) that the nation should not be dependent on other nations for its provisions of subsistence goods; (c) that the exportation of manufactures, especially luxuries, were more beneficial than the export of raw materials; and (d) that the opposite was true for importation (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 370-1; Forbonnais 1754, i, 52-4). That Postlethwayt would borrow such views would be no surprise to any reader of his *Dictionary*, where for example in the entry ‘Britain’ lengthy excerpts from *The British Merchant* had been reproduced purporting to show almost the same thing, namely that ‘the nature of [particular] trades with particular countries varies, nor are all alike beneficial’<sup>80</sup>

Where Forbonnais, and other authors belonging to the Gournay circle, went further than most previous authors was the extent to which they extolled the benefits of unobstructed competition between domestic producers. In the short chapter *De la concurrence* Forbonnais described competition, as ‘the most active Principle of useful Commerce’, and he developed this theme in the much longer chapter *Des Manufactures ou du travail industrieux*. Postlethwayt took notice, plagiarizing the former chapter in full in the section ‘Of Rivalship in Trade’ in Postlethwayt (1757a: 233-40), and most of the latter in section ‘Of Arts and Manufactories’ in Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 392-427).<sup>81, 82</sup> ‘Home

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France. A Huguenot of Walloon descent, he was educated in the Netherlands before settling in London in 1683 (see Veale 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Compare Postlethwayt (1751-5, i, ...) with King (1721, i, 21ff). Though *The British Merchant* was perhaps the most prominent publication distinguishing between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ trades, a doctrine finessed in opposition to the Treaty of Utrecht, the very idea that one should decide on a bi-lateral and product specific basis about the benefits, or not, of foreign trade was much more wide spread in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Cantillon (2015: 366 [D503]) argued that ‘we may examine the advantages, or disadvantages of every particular branch of trade with any foreign country’.

<sup>81</sup> With regards to the latter chapter, Postlethwayt (1757b) omits some passages. For example, the argument that one should only prohibit export of raw materials if they are a unique resource, including the example of the prohibition of export of English wool (Forbonnais 1754: i, 283-4) is omitted from Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 404) and likewise from Anonymous (1767:62). A longer passage omitted from Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 414), and Anonymous 1767:67, is a further discussion of the apprentice systems in England and France (Forbonnais 1754, i, 302-08). Finally neither Postlethwayt (1757b) nor Anonymous (1767) reproduce the important long footnote in Forbonnais (1754, i, 314-319) which criticises Dangeul’s (1754) views on taxation in relation to those of Locke, Davenant, Decker and Tucker.

<sup>82</sup> Specifically these two sections have received attention from the relatively few modern commentators on Postlethwayt’s ideas. Unfortunately, all have fallen victim to Postlethwayt’s deceit. To give some examples, the discussion of Johnson (1937: 191-204) highlighted these parts but at no point did he perceive that he was quoting passages translated from *Elémens*. Similarly, all but one of the references Grampp (1952) gave from Postlethwayt as illustrations of ‘liberal elements in English mercantilism’ are from Forbonnais. More recently Berg and Clifford (1999: 7-8) and Berg (2005: 35) highlight Postlethwayt’s analysis ‘Of Arts and Manufactories’ not realizing that this is no more than a translation from a French original. Similarly, Reinert (2011: 31-2) unwittingly gives an example of the very ‘emulation’ that forms

Rivalship' was defined as

Emulation in Work between Subjects: it consists in each of them being allowed to employ himself, in what he thinks most lucrative, or what is most pleasing to him, provided that Employment be useful to Society. It is the chief Basis of the Freedom of Trade; and alone contributes more than any other Means to procure a Nation that foreign Rivalship by which she grows rich and powerful (Postlethwayt 1757a: 235; from Forbonnais 1754, I, 95).

The encouragement of the greatest possible domestic competition would have 'prodigious effects' reducing the prices of manufactures, improving their quality, increasing consumption, as well as keeping profits in check, which in turn allowed for lower interest rates. Most importantly, by unrelenting efforts of domestic producers to outdo each other, national manufacturers would acquire the competitive strength to match foreign producers. Provided such efforts were successful, 'this foreign Rivalship is not to be obtained by Force; it is the Fruit of the Efforts of Industry to suit the Taste of the Consumer, and even to anticipate and spirit up that Taste' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 234).<sup>83</sup>

Postlethwayt fully endorsed this vision of building up national competitive strength. Acknowledging his frequent belligerent tone against the French, he professed that nevertheless it would be preferable to outdo them by peaceful means: 'for I would conquer the enemy by these [commercial and industrious] arts rather than by destructive measures [...] and this very way will make France infinitely more happy and more opulent than it is' (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 316).<sup>84</sup> In his *Dictionary* the nurturing of superior commercial and manufacturing expertise had been a theme he returned to over and over again.<sup>85</sup> To take a single example, in the entry 'Manufacture' Postlethwayt had

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the topic of his book: the passage he quotes about Postlethwayt's views on rivalry was in fact adopted from Forbonnais.

<sup>83</sup> Forbonnais (1754, i, 94): '*Cette concurrence extérieure ne se obtient point par la force; elle est le prix des efforts que fait l'industrie pour saisir les goûts du consommateur, les prévenir meme & les irriter*' Anonymous (1767:31) gives as an alternative translation: 'This rivalry at foreign markets is not acquired by force. It is the reward of the efforts which industry makes to suit the tastes of the consumers, and even to anticipate and excite them'.

<sup>84</sup> 'However severe many may think my writings appear against the French; yet the wise will not construe them as a conceived antipathy against that nation on the contrary, I profess myself a great admirer of the wisdom and policy of that nation. If they were no less faithful in their treaties, than they are artful in violating them, their statesmen would not be less admired for their honour than their nation is for its profound sagacity and politeness' (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 316-17).

<sup>85</sup> For a more detailed study the most convenient starting point is the entry 'Trade' where he provided the best short summary (and ample cross references to entries with further discussions) of his views about the basis for the 'lasting prosperity' of Britain. In the first place, this prosperity depended in a large measure on success in foreign trade. That is to say, 'the increase of the wealth, splendor, and power of Great-Britain and Ireland, depend upon exporting more in value of our native produce and manufactures, than we import of commodities from other nations, and bringing thereby money into the kingdom'. This rather conventional view about the dependence of national wealth on foreign trade was next supplemented by more specific and novel maxims: 'That the increase of trade and navigation greatly depends [...] on the increase of ingenious working artists of every kind, in order to improve the perfection and delicacy of our OLD MANUFACTURES, and to discover such NEW TRADES and MANUFACTURES, as will enable us, at least, to keep pace in wealth and power with our rival nations, if we cannot go beyond them. See our articles HUSBANDRY, MANURE, LANDED INTEREST, ARTIFICERS, MECHANICAL ARTS, MANUFACTURERS, TAPESTRY. That the support of a constant succession of TRADING ARTISTS amongst us of every class, greatly depends upon due public encouragement. See the beforementioned

expounded at some length on the topic of ‘the inventive faculty of our master manufacturers’, which should be so directed ‘as to design such a perpetual series of new modes and fashions in their fabrics, as may scarce ever fail to hit the taste of foreign nations’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 135). To achieve this they should engage in what we would call ‘market research’. That is to say, manufacturers should ‘consult the climate, the disposition, and way of thinking and judging of the several ranks of people’, either by visiting foreign consumers, through reading about their tastes, or by consulting well-informed merchants. They should also always study samples of goods sold by rival manufacturers, ‘gain a knowledge of any new invented looms, or other machines, or any kind of inventions, which are used in foreign countries’, and they should pay particular attention to the art of designing in order to serve the tastes of consumers (*ibid.* 134).

At almost the same time, Forbonnais expressed strikingly similar views in his chapter on manufacture<sup>86</sup>: ‘*Une seule chose peut acquérir à une nation la supériorité sur une autre dans la consommation extérieure des manufactures: c’est l’art de séduire ou de contenter mieux la consommateur dans tous les genres*’.<sup>87</sup> Given this agreement of views, it is no wonder that Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 398-403) adopted verbatim Forbonnais’s detailed discussion of this commercial ‘art of seducing, or pleasing’ (Forbonnais 1754, i, 273-83).

If these precocious arguments of both men related, so to say, to the ‘demand side’, there were strong parallels too between their views about the ‘supply side’, that is, about building competitive productive capacities. These included various measures to ensure sufficient numbers of skilled workmen, since, according to Postlethwayt,

the kingdom should always be supplied with a succession of adroit and ingenious working manufacturers, [so that] the master-manufacturers and undertakers will never want hands to execute their most delicate inventions, which will greatly contribute to the national improvement of these arts (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 134).

With regards to the specific measures that should be taken to enhance the supply of skilled workers, Postlethwayt found the views he had expressed in the *Dictionary* to a great degree confirmed by Forbonnais. They included more conventional calls for encouraging the immigration of foreign artisans, but also for the setting up of new training colleges for painting, design and other advanced manufacturing skills.<sup>88</sup> They

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articles and also that of CLOTH. That the support of a constant succession of ingenious trading artists, generally depends upon the improvements made from time to time in useful philosophy. See our articles CHEMISTRY, PHILOSOPHY-EXPERIMENTAL, MUSÆUM, ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 792). The repeated discussions in these and other entries about the use of science and ingenuity to produce new products and trade can be said to add up to a greater emphasis on this point in Postlethwayt’s writings than can be found in the works of the Gournay group.

<sup>86</sup> To be sure, the entry ‘Manufacture’ was included in issue 95 of the *Dictionary* first published in December 1753. Hence it is impossible that Postlethwayt was inspired by Forbonnais, and virtually impossible that an influence went the other way.

<sup>87</sup> Forbonnais 1754, I, 273, translated in Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 398, emphasis in original): ‘One only thing can secure to a nation a superiority over another in the foreign consumption of its manufactures: that is *the art of seducing, or pleasing to a higher degree the consumer of every kind*’.

<sup>88</sup> Postlethwayt did not think the nation should rely exclusively on the “on the job training” by individual master-manufacturers, but should ideally stimulate manufacturing skills by the setting up of formal training

also included advocacy of the reform of existing guild systems to avoid unnecessary restrictions of the freedom of trades, and of numbers of apprentices, while guaranteeing the high quality of products.<sup>89</sup>

Further proposals did not so much relate to boosting the numbers of skilled workers, as to the promotion of innovation itself. Amongst them were the call for societies for the advancement of useful knowledge<sup>90</sup> that would award prizes and bounties to stimulate new inventions or act as arbitrators for the soundness of new inventions<sup>91</sup>, or the opening of museums exhibiting exotic or ancient artifacts and unknown natural products that would inspire invention and emulation.<sup>92</sup> Postlethwayt repeatedly urged the introduction of such novel institutions because, he feared, these very things were being done by the great rival nation, France.<sup>93</sup>

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colleges: 'Without some such institution, they [*i.e.*, the arts] never yet were carried to an height in any country; no private fortune can stand out the time necessary to train up hands enough to extend the Art in Trade: but when once a sufficient number were made perfect in the seminary, private adventurers would be found ready enough to take up the business;' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 426, entry 'Patents'). It should be noted that Postlethwayt, by advocating the formal training in 'arts', that is practical manual skills, belonged to a succession of British authors who stressed their importance for the competitiveness of British manufacturing (see Johnson 1964). Such concern of 18<sup>th</sup> century authors actually chimes well with the hindsight of economic historians who point to the presence of large numbers of skilled artisans in Britain as one contributing factor to the occurrence of the industrial revolution (see e.g. Mokyr 2014: 287).

<sup>89</sup> 'Patents may be granted to reward a projector, and be no monopoly, though the public liberty may seem restrained by it, but rather a common distribution, whenever it brings a general good to the nation. The statutes restraining from exercising divers crafts all who have not served an apprenticeship to the art they would exercise, do it to no other end, but that those arts might be brought to better perfection, and the things may be good and serviceable'.

<sup>90</sup> Postlethwayt saw here not only a new role for the Royal Society, but also discussed various recent initiatives such as the Dublin Society, the Antigallician Society and especially he endorsed the initiative of William Shipley in 1754 to set up a Society for the Encouragement of the Arts and Manufactures (entry 'Royal Society' ii, 638).

<sup>91</sup> Postlethwayt offered fascinating, but apparently overlooked, discussions about the different financial motivations that should be available for inventions. In the entry 'Patents' (ii, 424) he argued that one-off financial rewards, like prizes, but no exclusive rights, should be given for inventions that lead to the introduction of a whole new branch of trade. The reason for this was that such inventions should be given over to various rivals to bring it to better execution. On the other hand, more specific improvements could be given temporary patents. A further discussion on the theme is found in the entry 'Monopoly'.

<sup>92</sup> See especially the entry 'Musaeum' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 303). There he had expressed very similar ideas to what Forbonnais wrote about the role of the 'prince' in stimulating talents and inventiveness by means of public buildings and '*les depots des choses rares & precieuses*' (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 319; 'repositories of scarce and valuable things' (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 530): 'There it is that artists ought chiefly to pique themselves on shewing the extent of their invention, and rivalling nature in all they do, emulate those beauties, whose charms, felt by all, command respect from the most capricious, and the ignorance of less happy ages'. The alternative translation in Anonymous (1767:213) is also worth mentioning: 'There it is that artists ought chiefly to pique themselves on shewing the luxuriance of their invention; and, ever studious to rival nature, attach themselves to those beauties whose charms, felt by all men, will imprint respect on the most capricious, and on the ignorance of less happy ages'. Forbonnais did not use the actual word *musée*, or the Anglicism *museum*. It is worth noting that the latter term was used soon after, until the Revolution to denote institutions with the special purpose of the study of applied arts and sciences (see Rey 1992: 2325).

<sup>93</sup> For an assessment of the actual French efforts in this period to promote innovation see Hilaire-Perez (1991).

Of some considerable interest is the application of the same logic about boosting national competitiveness both by Postlethwayt and by Forbonnais to the issue of the introduction of labour-saving devices. Postlethwayt first treated the question of the extent to which the use of machines in various productive activities was desirable in the *Dictionary* entries ‘Labour’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 1-6) and ‘Machine’ (ibid. ii, 120-1). In the former he put the discussion most directly in the context of the potential of ‘improvements in the mechanic arts and inventions [for] the keeping of the price of labour low, and in proportion to that of other neighbouring commercial states’ (ibid. ii, 4).<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, he there juxtaposed the discussion of the labour-saving effects of machinery with an account of the species-flow mechanism taken from Cantillon explaining ‘the natural causes of the rise and decay of nations in wealth and power, with regard to the price of labour’.<sup>95</sup> Postlethwayt appears to suggest that such machines are especially relevant for a commercially successful high-wage nation (like England) as a way of staving off the erosion of international competitiveness.<sup>96</sup>

Whilst this juxtaposition is Postlethwayt’s, the actual discussion of machines, he copied nearly verbatim from the work *Reflections on various subjects relating to arts and commerce* (1752) written, probably, by Richard Parrott of Hawkesbury (?-1774).<sup>97</sup> It can

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<sup>94</sup> The other author quoted at length in the entry ‘Labour’ is Matthew Decker, whose views about the effects of taxation on labour costs were used to supplement Cantillon’s brilliant discussion of the cost, or ‘intrinsic value’, of labour. As can be seen in table 3 above, in *True System*, letter seven, Postlethwayt would repeat this combination of borrowings.

<sup>95</sup> In the entry ‘Labour’ (ii, 5) the fragment adopted from Cantillon describes the ‘natural’ phenomenon that ‘when a nation gets a great plenty of money, and increases exorbitantly in its paper circulation, it naturally tends to decline by the dearness that happens of land, labour and commodities’. *Inter alia*, this account differs in several respects to the more famous account in the French version of Cantillon’s work (for both the English and French versions see Cantillon 2015: 296-319; for a further discussion of the English accounts in relation to Hume’s version of the price-specie flow theory see van den Berg 2012). While Cantillon’s main suggestion for slowing down this decline in competitiveness is the gradual removal of money from circulation, Postlethwayt by placing the fragment about the labour cost saving effects of the introduction of machines next to Cantillon’s account can be said to offer another remedy. Admittedly, Postlethwayt does not explicitly draw out the implications of the reduction in labour unit costs, through higher labour productivity, for Cantillon’s analysis of the ‘natural’ decline of rich nations.

<sup>96</sup> Postlethwayt, following a succession of 18<sup>th</sup> century British authors, was keenly aware of the fact that Britain was a ‘high-wage country’ when compared with most continental nations, including France. Even though he repeated more customary views about the need to reduce labour costs, for example by lowering the tax burden, he also belonged to a more select group of authors who recognised that rather than aiming to lower the wages of artisans, relatively generous wages would stimulate ingenuity and superior craftsmanship. One could preserve international competitiveness by, as a modern business economist would express it, ‘moving up the value chain’. Postlethwayt’s reasoning was read with some interest by Marx (1887 [1954], i, 260-1), and studied further by Coats (1958, 1960). Highlighting the benefits of the introduction of labour-saving devices was a further argument supporting the same aim of high quality production while reducing labour input per unit.

<sup>97</sup> For the attribution of this work see Higgs (1935:31). Parrott came from a prosperous family of coal mine-owners who lived at Hawkesbury Hall at Foleshill Church near Coventry and worked collieries at Hawkesbury in the Bedworth area. His date of death, May 1774, is obtained from his will (NA Prob 11/999/16). I have not been able to establish his year of birth. In ‘Machine’ Postlethwayt reproduces the pages 21-28 of Parrott’s *Reflections*, which includes the chapter entitled ‘Of Engines for Shortening Labour’. By being included in Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary* this excerpt received a more prominent exposure than in the original, which even at the time appears to have been little known. The issues containing

be compared briefly to the discussion of machines in Postlethwayt (1757b, ii: 377-8 417-21), which was taken straight from Forbonnais (1754, i: 65-6, 321-9).<sup>98</sup>

In both cases the introduction of labour saving devices is seen as a natural result of the ‘skill and rivalry of artists’. Where this rivalry concerned foreign trade the logic of favouring such innovations was strongest, since failure to adopt labour-saving technologies would mean that a nation would be priced out of the market. In Parrott’s words:

The more ingenious Nation will [...] stand the best chance to gain the whole market; for besides that *Machines* generally do the Work truer and better than the Hand, the Labour saved by them is so very great, that if *Materials* are equally plentiful, they who use the *Machine* must undersell the others in a vast Disproportion (Parrott 1752: 25; Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 121).

Forbonnais largely agreed, pointing out that “process innovation” was generally as requisite to gaining or preserving foreign trade as was “product innovation”:

We do not see any objection that can be made to the oeconomising of time, or facilitating the work of manufactories, which may not be equally well made to all inventions of new fashions, or of new stuffs, by which the old are forgot. And yet such changes do happen every day without the least prejudice to society; and I believe no man will say it is in the interest of a nation to prohibit new manufactories, in order to favour the workmen employed in the old. In short, the prejudice we are speaking of is incompatible with the preservation of the foreign trade of a state; for the steps a state takes must be guided by those *which foreigners take* (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii: 419-20; from Forbonnais 1754, i, 325-6; emphasis only in the English).

There was, however, an important reservation to Forbonnais’s endorsement of labour-saving devices. Their application should be limited to manufacturing processes: ‘care must be taken not to judge of the machines made use of in manufacturing, as one would of such as might be invented to abridge the tillage of land’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii: 420). Whilst machines employed in the production of manufactures would secure their foreign and domestic demand, primarily by reducing their costs, he argued that the abridgment of labour in agriculture would reduce domestic demand for manufactures, by reducing rural population.<sup>99</sup> This significant reservation about the application of machinery, even in an open economy, reflected Forbonnais’s view that the foremost function of agriculture was to yield the nation secure provisions of food and raw materials, and to support the

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‘Labour’ and ‘Machine’ were first published at the end of September and mid-December 1753 respectively, so about a year after the appearance of Parrott’s contribution.

<sup>98</sup> Modern commentators on the discussions of machines in Postlethwayt’s publications have not compared the two contributions. Nor have they identified the two distinct sources on which he relied. Groenewegen (2002: 145-46) examines the views about machinery in the entry ‘Machine’, but fails to note that the related extract in ‘Labour’ (II, 5) is accompanied by a, somewhat vague, reference to *Reflections on various subjects* and hence treats the discussion as being Postlethwayt’s original views. Berg (1983: 40-42), for her part, examines the machinery question as covered in Postlethwayt (1757b), but does not seem to realize that the relevant passages are actually taken from Forbonnais.

<sup>99</sup> ‘The home circulation can never be better secured than by the increase of that class of men, who are the fund of the populousness [*population*] of a state; I mean the cultivators of its lands. Every machine tending to diminish their employment would really be destructive of the strength of society, the mass of men, and home consumption’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 420-1; from Forbonnais 1754, i: ...).

domestic demand for manufactures, and *not* to supply commodities to foreign markets.<sup>100</sup>

Parrott's endorsement of machinery was not unconditional either, but his reasoning differed. Instead of distinguishing between agriculture and manufacturing, he distinguished between 'states without [foreign] commerce [which] regard chiefly the increase of numbers [of people] and their home markets; [and] commercial states [which] are too apt to consider wealth alone and foreign markets' (Postlethwayt 1751-5, ii, 121; from Parrott 1752, ...). Machines that did not replace labour were unobjectionable in both kind of state. Such were engines that either 'do such business as cannot be performed by hand at all', or 'where the commodities wrought by them are such as would not have been used at all, except they were done by the machine, either being not cheap enough for consumption, when prepared by hand'.<sup>101</sup> A different category were 'all the variety of inventions produced by a rivalry amongst nations contending for commerce, and private men for orders', such as 'stocking-looms, sawing-mills, throwing-engines, weaving or spinning-engines, mills for striking files, cutting watch-wheels, making nails'. While 'a people without commerce may safely refuse' such machines, 'commercial states must have their eyes on their neighbours, and, if they design to engross foreign markets, must provide for the cheapness of labour at home'.

It should be noted that the difference in argument with regards to the application of labour-saving devices in agriculture did not stop Postlethwayt from copying most of the very lengthy chapter on agriculture from *Elémens* (see Appendix B). As long as they did not lead to economizing on rural labour, Forbonnais was in fact very keen on all kind of agricultural improvements. Forbonnais was especially fascinated by the use of new crop rotation methods and fertilizers as practiced in the advanced agricultural areas of southern England.<sup>102</sup> Most of this would have struck Postlethwayt as very compatible with the content of entries from his *Dictionary*, like 'Husbandry' (i, 963-4) and 'Manure' (ii, 138-144). In fact, the two men were using some of the same agronomical writers, like Tull and Duhamel.<sup>103</sup> What is, however, lacking from Postlethwayt's earlier publication,

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<sup>100</sup> Alimento (2014b: 1063 n.93) points out that in the later edition of *Elémens* of 1767, however, Forbonnais omitted this argument against the introduction of machinery in agriculture. This was probably in response to the fact that the physiocrats offered quite a new analysis. In this context the exchanges between Baudeau and Graslin about the machinery question are particularly instructive. This point cannot be pursued here.

<sup>101</sup> In the first category he included 'pumps, fire engines, water-engines, looms, wine and oil-presses, hand-mills for grain, and perhaps horse-mills'. As a mine-owner Parrott would have been especially familiar with the first two kinds of engines. In the second category he included 'mills for paper, those for forging, drawing, slitting of iron, copper, or lead, fulling of cloths and leather, and making gunpowder'.

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion of what is called the Norfolk four-course rotation see Overton (2007). In subsequent decades versions of this practice spread throughout Europe. As far as I am aware, the question whether Forbonnais lengthy treatment of this subject in his widely read book played any significant role in its implementation outside Britain has not been seriously studied. The fact that Forbonnais could not know that higher level of nitrogen in the soil was the chemical reason for the substantially higher yields obtained with this system is of course less important in this respect.

<sup>103</sup> Postlethwayt's discussion of Duhamel ('Husbandry', i, 963-4) is another good example of his detailed knowledge of the contemporary French literature. Referring to the first volume of Duhamel's work, published in 1750, he wrote: 'a translation of Mr Tull's book was undertaken [in France], at one and the same time by three different persons of consideration, without the privity of each other: but, afterwards, two of them put their papers into the hands of the third, Mons. Du Hamel du Monceau, of the Royal

although he did copy some of it in *Britain's Commercial Interest* was the outspoken misgivings of Forbonnais about large scale and more capital intensive agricultural enterprises. According to Sonenscher (2007: 181), Forbonnais was particularly influenced on this point by Melon and a decade later it would be part of his very open disagreement with Quesnay. One senses, however, that these misgivings resonated far less with Postlethwayt and within the context of British debates about agricultural modernization.<sup>104</sup>

For all this emphasis on policies for improving productivity and competitiveness, neither Postlethwayt nor Forbonnais had any fundamental trust in the peaceable and beneficial nature of free international trade. Both men squarely focused on national commercial interests and, in their view, it would be naïve to think that these would not normally be harmed by exposing one's commerce to foreign competition. Accordingly, there were further similarities between their specific protectionist arguments. For example, they each advocated carefully calibrated systems of tariffs and bounties to protect domestic

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Academy of Sciences at Paris, and of the Royal Society at London, who has published a book, intitled a Treatise of Tillage, on the principles of Mr Tull. The ingenious author has, indeed, in some measure, altered the method observed by Mr Tull in his book, yet he has very exactly given his principles and rules: but, as he had only seen the first edition of the Horse-Hoeing Husbandry, so he is very defective in his descriptions of the ploughs and drills, which in that were very imperfect, and were afterwards amended by Mr Tull, in his additions to that essay.' Postlethwayt further commended Duhamel's work for its calculation of profits before and after introduction new techniques which showed a doubling: 'As this computation was made by one who cannot be supposed to have any prejudice in favour of Mr Tull's scheme [i.e. a Frenchman], it will naturally find more credit with the public than any comparison made by Mr Tull himself, or by such who approve his principles'. Forbonnais (1754, i, 150) also refers to Duhamel, although to another work the *Traité de la conservation des grains*. He is not very clear about his additional British sources, although in one place he refers to 'essais de M. Elliot' (*ibid.* 256) and to the famous figure Charles 'Turnip' Townsend (1674-1738) (*ibid.* i, 189-90).

<sup>104</sup> To qualify this point, surprisingly Postlethwayt associated Forbonnais's discussion of agriculture with another British economist from the early decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Jacob Vanderlint. As Coats (1958: 38) was first to point out, Postlethwayt (1757b) included a sizable, unacknowledged, excerpt from Vanderlint (1734) and seems thereby one of the few 18<sup>th</sup> century economists to use the latter's work (Adam Smith's alleged borrowing from Vanderlint, probably first suggested by McCulloch, is another, more well-know, case). To be precise, Postlethwayt (1757b, I, 14-55) reproduced Vanderlint (1734: 28-30, 67-164), but not as Coats states by 'word-for-word copying'. Instead, in a break with his customary practice of near *verbatim* plagiarism, Postlethwayt resorted to paraphrasing and curtailng. In the *Dictionary* entry 'Manure' (139-45) he had already reproduced pages 2-41 and 52-64 from Vanderlint (1734), that time nearly *verbatim*. What is interesting about the plagiarism of Vanderlint in Postlethwayt (1757b), however, is that it preceded the plagiarism from Forbonnais. The two pieces are only separate by a more 'empirical' discussion of the state of agriculture in Ireland and Scotland. It must be said that several aspects of Vanderlint's ideas, for example, about the importance of the extension of land under cultivation, the more plentiful employment and reduced economic inequality that are to be expected from it, and the aim of substituting foreign imports of food and raw materials (bar those that cannot be grown at all in the own country), are indeed quite compatible with those of Forbonnais. This seems to be the reason why Postlethwayt found it easy to combine the two men's writings about agricultural improvement. This is not meant to imply that Forbonnais would have known Vanderlint's work when he wrote *Elémens*, as he may have done Cantillon's. Vanderlint does not seem to figure amongst the English authors studied by the Gournay circle.

manufactures from foreign competition.<sup>105</sup> Of course, foreign trade could be very beneficial, but trade agreements should normally be concluded on a bilateral basis. For such commercial treaties to be ‘equal’ and mutually agreeable, statesmen needed great negotiating skills and detailed circumstantial knowledge about the products and markets involved. Furthermore, Forbonnais and Postlethwayt agreed to a large extent with regards to the measures required for their protecting their nation’s colonial empires and the dominant role of the motherland within them.<sup>106</sup>

Without making this section too long, some things must also be said about the similarities in the men’s views about the method of ‘political commerce’. Most importantly, they believed that the ‘art and science of the administration of *political commerce*’ was a complicated discipline requiring expert knowledge that could be applied to ever varying circumstances. There were three main sources of the statesman’s economic knowledge: past experience of international commercial relations and policies; merchants’ specialist knowledge; and political arithmetic.

The view that a science of the administration of commerce should be based on lessons drawn from historical experience and the commercial policies of successful trading

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<sup>105</sup> The comparison is best made by looking at Postlethwayt’s use of Forbonnais’s chapter *De la navigation*. Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 324) has the phrase ‘our excellent act of navigation in England’ where Forbonnais (1754, i, 355) has *‘fameux acte de navigation des Anglois’*; Forbonnais (unlike Gournay; see discussion in Alimento 2014b) did not favour the introduction of a similar policy in France (apart from coastal trade) but proposes (1754, i, 357 *‘un autre expedient plus doux & d’un effet plus certain’* [(1757b:325) ‘another more gentle and more certain method’], namely by [1754: 357] *‘etablir la plus grande concurrence possible dans sa navigation’* [1757b: 325: ‘to promote the greatest rivalship possible in our own navigation’] General maxim from 1754: 362-3 is translated as [1767:81; 1757b: 328-9]: ‘this maxim; that navigation, like all other parts of trade, cannot be safely guided without the help of calculation. Every operation that promotes the advantage of other nations in point of rivalship, is destructive of the riches of the subject, and of the state; every operation whereby their advantage is promoted [329], is, to the body politic, a source of new prosperity.’ Therefore ‘skilful nations’ [‘les peuples habiles’] remove all duties on exports of national productions, and give bounties while keeping ‘the duties already laid on importations’, this give the country ‘in a short time a great maritime strength, without being exposed to the resentment of other states’ [which would be the case if one introduces prohibitions like the Navigation Act]. From 1754, I, 371, 1757b:332, has ‘It is evident, from the history of trade, and that of all maritime powers, not one excepted, that great fisheries have always been the epocha of a great trading navigation, and of a great marine’ (cf entry ‘Fisheries’ (I, 775-794, wealth of material).

<sup>106</sup> Hence Postlethwayt (1757b, i, 153-167) adopted a large part of Forbonnais’s chapter on colonies (i.e. Forbonnais 1754, ii, 21-49). In this chapter Forbonnais defended the exclusive rights of the mother nation to the natural products of the colonies. However, a significant omission from Postlethwayt (1757b, I, 159) is Forbonnais’s endorsement of the slave trade (‘The slave trade ought therefore be looked upon, favoured, and supported, as the basis of the culture of the colonies’, see Forbonnais [1754, ii, 33-36]). The reason for the omission is that in the late 1740s Postlethwayt had a change of mind about the morality of the slave trade. This is evident already from *Dictionary* entries like ‘Africa’ and ‘Guinea’. In Postlethwayt (1757b, ii, 216-221 and 268-9) he put forward views that were clearly incompatible with Forbonnais’s views (to give a flavor: ‘For my own part, I cannot help expressing my dislike to the slave-trade, and wish an end could be put to it; and I am inclined to believe that practicable without injury to our plantations’ (ibid. 217). It is not clear what explains Postlethwayt’s change of heart (he had been a paid employee of the Royal African Company and had argued in print in favour of it’s slave trading interest) and, given the fact that the modern literature on the slave trade is often ambiguous about his position, this merits further investigation. Brown (2010: 84-100) is a good start. It should further be noted that Anonymous (1767) includes all of Forbonnais’s chapter, not only 1754: 1-21 (see 1767: 87-93) but also the passage about slavery (1767:97).

nations was typical not only for Forbonnais's approach, but for most authors belonging to the Gournay circle. Cheney (2011) rightly highlights the extensive use by these authors of commercial histories not just as a rhetorical device, but as a method of economic analysis. By studying past and current national commercial practices one might learn what would be successful for one's own nation at present, provided one took into accounts its unique circumstances.

Postlethwayt was fully signed up to such an approach.<sup>107</sup> Not only did he consistently include commercial histories in his *Dictionary* when dealing with various nations and regions throughout the world, in *Britain's Commercial Interest* he preceded several hundreds of pages, starting with a 100 page examination of 'the system of policy pursued by France from the year 1701', with an explanation of why one should pursue such studies: one examined the experience of competitor nations to be able to emulate their successes. A major reason why France had, in his opinion, strongly improved its economic performance, even catching up with Britain, was that

they had the advantage indeed of our laws for their guidance; and they have shewed as much sagacity in imitating the best, as in rejecting the worse: whereby they have, in many respects, improved in their laws and regulations of commerce and navigation upon ours; and if there is any thing importantly useful to borrow from them in our turn, it is to be hoped that we shall not be unwise as to condemn it, because it is of French production (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 9-10).

A second aspect of this pragmatic, 'experience based', approach was the view that specialist merchants' knowledge was indispensable for making good commercial policy. As we saw, in the *Avertissement* of the second edition of *Elémens* Forbonnais had distinguished between the 'mechanical' and the 'political' knowledge of commerce. The passage had been the one quote from the book that had found its way into Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*. In chapter one Forbonnais explained how the two kinds of knowledge, the 'know how of to trade' and the 'know how of how to direct trade' related to one another:

To know how to trade, or how to direct trade, are two very different things. To direct it properly, requires a knowledge of how it ought to be done; a man may gain by trade without knowing how it ought to be directed. The merchant's science is in the detail of his particular business: the political science consists in the use that may be made of all those details (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 390).<sup>108</sup>

In his earlier works Postlethwayt had repeatedly made similar distinctions and for similar reasons.<sup>109</sup> On the one hand, the distinction was meant to signal the different *objective*

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<sup>107</sup> Of course this was not all too surprising since the genre of commercial histories, far from having been invented by the Gournay group or Postlethwayt, was well established by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>108</sup> Translation of Forbonnais (1754, i: 87): 'Sçavoir faire le commerce ou sçavoir le conduire, sont deux choses très-distinctes: pour le bien conduire il faut sçavoir comment il se fait; pour le faire avec profit, il est inutile de sçavoir comment il doit se conduire. La science du négociant est celle des details don't il s'occupe: la science du politique est le parti quel'on peut tirer de ces details'.

<sup>109</sup> See e.g. the entry Britain (i, 349): '[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'. Similar statements can be found in Postlethwayt (1749: 27) (1750: 63-74) (1751-5, i, 547 entry

that the political branch of the science of commerce aimed at, namely to ensure *national* economic interests. Men operating in particular trades were of course motivated by prospects of their personal gain, and these did not necessarily coincide with the ‘gains of the state’ (*ibid*).<sup>110</sup> Hence special pleadings of merchants always needed to be weighed carefully against the national interest. On the other hand, national economic policy needed to be constantly informed by detailed knowledge of particular trades. For Forbonnais, if the ‘political science consisted in the use that may be made of all details [of commercial knowledge]’ then ‘that knowledge cannot be gathered but from merchants. One cannot converse with them too much in order to learn; but in deliberating, their advices are to be received with caution’ (Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 390).<sup>111</sup> Nearly the same view can be found in Postlethwayt.<sup>112</sup>

Even though both men came from a mercantile background and pursued administrative positions and political patronage in their capacity of experts on matters of trade (Forbonnais with more success than Postlethwayt), there is no reason to doubt their sincerity when stating their belief that men of business could inform commercial law and policies in the national interest.<sup>113</sup> With this came a keen interest in political and administrative institutions where the voices of traders should be heard. Postlethwayt celebrated the fact that in Britain ‘many ingenious merchants’ had ascended to membership of both houses of parliament and in these positions put their commercial expertise at the service of the nation.<sup>114</sup> Forbonnais, and other authors of the circle,

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‘Commerce’; ii, 792 entry ‘Trade’). The more prosaic way in which this distinction is evident in the *Dictionary* is that Postlethwayt regularly subdivided entries into separate sections dealing with ‘practical’ and ‘political’ aspects of the topic under consideration. See van den Berg (2016).

<sup>110</sup> This was hardly an original insight. Writers since Thomas Mun had made this point. Notably, it had also been the first maxim of Janssen’s contribution to *The British Merchant*.

<sup>111</sup> From Forbonnais (1754, i, 87): ‘*ce n’est que par les négocians que l’on peut s’en instruire: on ne sçauroit trop converser avec eux pour apprendre; pour délibérer, leurs conseils doivent être admis avec précaution*’.

<sup>112</sup> For example, in the introduction to the first volume of his *Dictionary* Postlethwayt had insisted that: ‘[...] *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 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).

<sup>113</sup> Skornicki (2006) provides an interesting interpretation of the activities of the Gournay circle as an attempt to create a new form of economic expertise in the service of the state.

<sup>114</sup> See e.g. Postlethwayt (1751-5, ii, 224-5, entry ‘Mercantile College’). There he named as examples, ‘Sir Charles Coke, Sir Theodore Janssen, James Milner esq., Mr. Nathaniel Toriano, Mr. Joshua Gee, Mr. Christopher Haynes, Mr. David Martin’ (most of whom had contributed to *The British Merchant*, the preface of which was paraphrased in this passage) and as contemporary examples he named Sir John Barnard and William Beckford. In the entry ‘Parliament’ (ii, 413-22) he provided a detailed discussion of the expertise in financial and economic matters required of members of parliament (beyond the traditional training in the classics) and quoted Uztariz (p.418) about the importance of wise legislation for national

likewise admired this aspect of the British political system.<sup>115</sup> Conversely, Postlethwayt had a great, even exaggerated, admiration for the Council of Commerce, the principal administrative channel through which the voices of merchants were heard in France. In the *Dictionary* he pleaded in many places for its emulation in Britain.<sup>116</sup> Such concerns with the political institutions for the administration of commerce expressed a fundamental epistemic point about economic knowledge itself: national economic policies were to be based on the balanced aggregation of particular commercial facts.<sup>117</sup>

This is also relevant for the third source of economic knowledge for men of state, i.e., political arithmetic. As noted, both Postlethwayt and Forbonnais had the highest regard for this early version of economic statistics, and especially the works of Charles Davenant, which according to the Frenchman ‘cannot be meditated too much by men of

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prosperity and Child’s view that the reason for the success of the commercial policies of the Dutch was that ‘they have in their greatest councils of state and war *Trading Merchants*, that have lived abroad in most parts of the world who have not only the *Theoretical Knowledge*, but the *Practical Experience of Trade*, by whom laws and orders are contrived, and peaces with foreign princes projected, to the great advantage of their trade’ (p.421; emphases in the original).

<sup>115</sup> See e.g. Butel Dumont (1755:8) remarked that ‘the English parliament takes particular care of its matters of trade. Attentive to the most minor [changes in] circumstances it ceaselessly finds reasons to squash, revoke, and rearrange old regulations and to make new ones’. Indeed it would be very enlightening to study the consecutive changes in British commercial legislation because this would yield ‘a kind of *histoire raisonnée*’ of its administrative practice. Dangeul (1754), as his English reviewer noted specifically, marveled at the public spiritedness of the merchant members of the House of Commons. The British merchant must have a noble spirit indeed if he could sit with the sons of peers (Anonymous 1754: 147-8). This despite Dangeul’s criticism –and that of Forbonnais 1754, ii, 270-1 (a passage expediently left out by Postlethwayt 1757b, ii, 539)- of the venality of political offices in Britain.

<sup>116</sup> See e.g. the entries ‘Member of Parliament’ (ii, 421), ‘Turkey Trade’ (ii, 818) and ‘Virginia’ (ii, 825). In ‘Turkey Trade’ Postlethwayt expressly addressed the problem that the mercantile experts whose views were channeled through this administrative structure were also of course interested parties. He painted a idealized process of disputation between experts that allowed the general interest of the state to be discerned. He provided further admiring accounts in Postlethwayt (1756: 62) and (1757b, ii, 107-11). A typical discussion was also included in Postlethwayt (1757a: 259): ‘[In France] Laws and Regulations, in general, are extremely minute, and appear to be derived from a very exact and circumstantial State of the Commerce, as carried on by the Merchants and Traders; which indicates that the Legislators in all Countries cannot be too fully and particularly informed of the various Methods and the Arts made use of by Traders in the Prosecution of their respective Branches, the better to enable them to adapt and conform their Laws to the Nature of peculiar Branches, that the national Prosperity of being thereby promoted’. Not everybody shared such admiration for French administrative practice. The reviewer of Postlethwayt (1757a) in the *Monthly Review* demurred, judging that there was ‘some exaggeration’ in Postlethwayt’s assessment of ‘the advantages of our enemy over us in trade’ and that readers should for some counter examples read the *abbé Le Blanc’s Letters of a Frenchman*. However, Postlethwayt was not alone on this issue. For example, another well-informed discussion of the benefits of the French Council of Commerce, in favourable comparison to British Board of Trade, can be found in Mildmay (1765: 101-5), the economic spy and diplomat (see Robbie 2003). Bennett (2011, chapter 4) provides an excellent discussion of the significant influence of the advocacy of the French model of business representation by Postlethwayt and other contemporaries for the origins of the movement for chambers of commerce in Britain and the American republic. Whether in practice the French council of commerce worked as effectively as was believed by its British admirers is a different question, which Smith (2002, 2011) studies in detail.

<sup>117</sup> This is perhaps one of the most fundamental differences with the economic thinking of Quesnay, (the later) Turgot and Adam Smith: their general economic principles were not obtained from an *aggregation* of particular facts but by means of a process of *abstracting* from them. This point cannot be further addressed in the current paper.

state' (Forbonnais 1754, ii, 318). Davenant's 'Of the Use of Political Arithmetic', reproduced by both men as a key text (see above p...), had presented this instrument of statecraft precisely as a supplement to the partial insights of merchants.<sup>118</sup> Objective, factual knowledge about the relative strengths of nations could be derived from data gathered routinely by the state especially the excise, customs and land-tax: 'Those duties are the very pulse of a nation, from which its health or decay may be observed' (Postlethwayt 1751-5: 489).

Thus, even more than the precise mixture of economic liberalism and protectionism that can be found in the writing of both Forbonnais and Postlethwayt, and which has puzzled some commentators, the characteristic approach they shared consists most of all in the thoroughly pragmatic method of 'political commerce'.

## Section 5 and conclusion

Recent research has provided us with a detailed picture of how roughly in the two decades following the intense publication activity of the Gournay circle, French ideas about the revival and active administration of trade and manufacturing spread across continental Europe. Summing up this phenomenon, Alimento (2014a: 1025) observes that 'the reception accorded to Forbonnais's thought was particularly lively in states –such as Spain, Portugal and the Dutch Republic- that were striving to halt their economic decline, as well as middle-ranking states, like the Holy Roman Empire, that were endeavouring to regulate their internal equilibrium'.

Postlethwayt was alive to this new 'manufacturing Impulse, this Spirit of Commerce' in European nations that 'are but Infant-Trading-States in Comparison to ours'.<sup>119</sup> For inspiration these states looked to France:

from the Success of the Measures taken by France, they have wisely pursued the same: For, before States establish Fabricks for Sale to other Nations, they will first endeavor to serve themselves with what they were before obliged to take from others. This will bring their Hands in, and they know it is in their Interest to be contented with such Fabricks as they are capable of making in their own Country, 'till they shall be able to vie with those Nations, who have long been their Predecessors therein (Postlethwayt 1757a: 231).

What relevance did such "infant industry" policies pursued by 'Beginners' have for an

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<sup>118</sup> To quote Davenant from Postlethwayt's reprint in the entry 'Political Arithmetic' (1751-5: 489): 'There is hardly a society of merchants that would not have it thought the whole prosperity of the kingdom depends upon their single traffic. So that at any time, when they come to be consulted their answers are dark and partial; and when they deliberate themselves in assemblies, it is too frequently with a bias, and a secret eye to their own emolument'

<sup>119</sup> '[The encouragement of manufacturing] has of late Years been the Practice of several Parts of Germany, of Switzerland, of Poland, of Sweden, of Denmark and of Austria; and such is the present Practice of several States in Italy; and at length, the manufacturing Impulse, this Spirit of Commerce has been embraced by Spain itself, and renders our Trade with that Nation less and less beneficial. These are but Infant-Trading-States in Comparison to ours; and so indeed is France itself in Point of Time' (Postlethwayt 1757a: 231).

advanced nation like Britain? First, Postlethwayt insisted, it would be foolish if Britain should be complacent since ‘these Beginners may the sooner overtake us in many of our Manufactures’. Anyone thinking that this was only a remote possibility should heed the case of France: ‘we had the Start of them for near two Centuries, yet do we not find that they now tread upon our Heels, and are likely to trip us up?’ (*ibid.* 231-2). Second, a *leading* commercial nation should not imitate, but innovate. In order for Britain to stay ahead it should be actively ‘encouraging the constant Invention of pleasing Modes and Fashions, which might fall in with the Taste of the World’ and making sure that ‘proper public Encouragement be constantly given to breed up a Succession of the best Artists and Designers’ (*ibid.* 230). Economic success, for leading commercial nations not less than emerging ones, depended on ongoing improvement since, as we saw, ‘the constant support of trade depends on a constant succession of new arts, on the improvement of the old manufactures, and the discovery of the new as well as whatever lese has a tendency to lessen the price of labour’ (Postlethwayt 1751-5, i, 124, entry ‘Asphaltum’). It was precisely for this reason that Forbonnais’s *Elémens du commerce* was relevant in a British context too.

As was shown in this paper, Postlethwayt was not just alert to current developments in economic *practice* across the Channel, he was also impressively well-abreast of the newest economic *thinking* on the continent. He must have regretted that, unlike the writings of the ‘sage Spaniard’ Uztáriz, the works of Forbonnais appeared just too late for inclusion of all but a single quotation in his most enduring work, the *Dictionary of Commerce*. But in his subsequent publications, infused by the nationalistic fervor of the Seven Years’ War, he adopted whole chapters from Forbonnais’s *Elémens*. It was a very literal, though surreptitious, application of his motto *Fas est & ab hoste doceri* [right it is to be taught even by the enemy].

Although completely overlooked until now, it will mainly have been through Postlethwayt’s two later books that Forbonnais’s *Elémens* may have had an indirect further impact in the Anglophone world. It should be stressed that in his time Postlethwayt was not an obscure author. Despite long neglect by later historians, more focused as they often have been on originality and analytical rigor in past authors, Postlethwayt was in fact a leading economic voice in Britain in the 1750s and 1760s.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Apart from the very negative assessment by Fay (1934), the balanced discussion by Johnson (1937) was for a long time one of the few lengthy discussion of Postlethwayt’s writings. Schumpeter (1954: 372, 157) relied on those two studies when judging, in characteristic fashion, that Postlethwayt was worth mentioning only ‘to give an instance of the interesting phenomenon of the survival of names associated with substandard performance’ [note to self: never ask Schumpeter to speak at your funeral!]. The best that could be said of Postlethwayt was that at least ‘he was intelligent enough to see the importance of Cantillon’s book’. It must be noted that for all his qualities, Schumpeter, no different from other students, failed to realize who was the true author of the one passage in Postlethwayt (1757a) that in his opinion was ‘not devoid of a certain crude common sense’, namely the passage ‘that interprets interest as a payment to hoarders by those who stand in need of it, i.e. as a payment necessary in order to overcome people’s reluctance to part with cash. This reads like a clumsy version of Lord Keynes’s own-rate theory of interest’ (Schumpeter 1954: 372 n.15). Schumpeter’s comment can only refer to the argument in Postlethwayt (1757a: 336-7). This, however, was a straight translation from Forbonnais (1754, ii, 144-7). More generous is Hutchison (1988: 241) who calls Postlethwayt an ‘interesting contributor to the consolidation of economic knowledge in England in the 1750s’. A few recent commentators go further. Reinert (2011: 31)

While his more lasting fame was admittedly due primarily to his *Dictionary of Commerce*, his two bulky later publications also had a significant readership.<sup>121</sup> One important reader was the crucial American statesman Alexander Hamilton, who did not only made a painstaking study of Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*, but also perused *True System* and *Britain's Commercial Interest*.<sup>122</sup> Although the significance of 'the science and art of the administration of political commerce' for Hamilton's economics remains to be fully assessed, even a casual reader of the latter's 'Report on Manufactures' (1791) and other economic writings can appreciate its relevance.

It is furthermore not impossible that other British economists were influenced more directly by Forbonnais. One London based economist to name in this context is Thomas Mortimer (1730-1810). In 1772 Mortimer published *Elements of Commerce*, the only English work of the period besides Tucker's (see above) carrying this title. It is not a translation of Forbonnais's book, but covers many of the same themes and frequently shares the Frenchman's points of view. It would not go too far to say that Mortimer's *Elements* was loosely based on *Elémens*.<sup>123</sup> It is also worth noting that the subtitle of Mortimer's own *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (1766-7) carried the phrase 'the general principles of Commerce' in the subtitle. This phrase, then quite uncommon in the British economic literature, was identical to the title of the 1767 print of the English translation of Forbonnais's book that was examined above.<sup>124</sup> While this similarity may be a coincidence, it could indicate that Mortimer had something to do with the printing of the latter work.<sup>125</sup>

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speaks of 'the great London political economist Malachy Postlethwayte'. Bennett (2011: 96) suggests that 'Postlethwayt was the Keynes of his day, the leading economist whose writings were universally known'. The comparison to Keynes appears rather random, although strangely reminiscent of Schumpeter's remark. Perhaps the only real similarity is that Postlethwayt too wrote a work dealing with the question 'how to pay for the war'. The second part of Bennett's assessment, however, is scarcely an exaggeration.

<sup>121</sup> The relative popularity of Postlethwayt (1757b) is suggested by the fact that a second print appeared in 1759 (see Higgs 1931: 195, item 1891).

<sup>122</sup> For Hamilton's reading of Postlethwayt's *Dictionary*, the best studies remain Panagopoulos (1957) and (1961). Most subsequent commentators on this connection go back to these studies. Amongst students who have noticed Hamilton's reliance on Postlethwayt (1757a) this most recent is Salasman (2017).

<sup>123</sup> Much precise textual evidence could be given to support this case. It would include, just from the first 8 pages of Mortimer's work –the opening paragraph of chapter one which is nearly identical to the corresponding paragraph in Forbonnais (1754); the emphasis on navigation as a complement of commerce (Mortimer 1772: 3/Forbonnais 1754, I, 5); the characterization of foreign trade as consisting of the exchange of 'superfluous commodities' (p. 3/p.6); the way in which God's providence is referred to (p.3/p.2); and the brief history of commerce from antiquity onwards (pp. 4-14) which is reminiscent of, though different in details from Forbonnais 1754, i, 8ff).

<sup>124</sup> In fact the two works appear to be the *only* ones in this period to have had the phrase in their titles.

<sup>125</sup> Two further facts supporting this conjecture are (1) that Mortimer was very familiar with Postlethwayt's work, plagiarized several entries from the latter's *Dictionary* (see van den Berg 2015: 35) at the same time as on occasion speaking badly of his rival. The same borrowing practice from Postlethwayt is observable in Anonymous (1767, pages 224, 240, 267, 270, 301)- and see the jibe apparently aimed at Postlethwayt in note ... above; (2) Anonymous (1767) was presumably printed around the time of Postlethwayt's death in September 1767. This is consistent with a person seizing the opportunity to plunder a rival's literary possessions. However, if the text was indeed printed in 1767 then the manuscript must have been obtained prior to the public sale of Postlethwayt's library, since that commenced in March 1768. But perhaps Anonymous (1767) was printed a year or so later.

Quite apart from the specific backgrounds of physical texts, what is the significance of this newly discovered reception of Forbonnais's *outré-Manche*? First, it would be wrong to say, that Postlethwayt was deeply influenced by his French contemporary. As we saw, many of the opinions and views of the Frenchman were close to ones already expressed by the Englishman in his earlier publications. Instead the significance of Postlethwayt's adaptation of Forbonnais's writings lies in just how well they dovetailed with his own ideas. In a real sense the economic views of the two men belong to a likeminded set of ideas that has often been rejected as unoriginal and devoid of analytical rigour.<sup>126</sup> That does not mean however, that this set of ideas was without influence in its day. Indeed, the writings of Forbonnais and Postlethwayt may well be prime representatives of the kind of economic wisdom that dominated prior to the arrival on the scene of, to name the two crucial figures, Quesnay in France and Adam Smith in Britain.

How can this approach of be characterized? In the first place, surely they both were strongly nationalistic, patriotic economists who had few illusions about the inevitability of continued commercial rivalry between nations.<sup>127</sup> It is important to recognize, however, that this did not imply any dogmatic protectionism. Instead, as Alimento (2014a: 1024) rightly emphasises in Forbonnais's case, they were above all pragmatists whose criterion for a good economic policy was whether it would meet the objective of a stronger, more prosperous nation. Modern public finance, for example, was highly desirable for its support to the nation's ability to safeguard its political and economic interest, by military means if needed, as long as it also afforded both moderate taxes and low interest rates that preserved international competitiveness. *Concurrence*, or rivalry, provided it made the national economy stronger, should be encouraged. Indeed, active measures should be taken to nurture private competitiveness and ingenuity through a range of policies ranging from reforms of the apprentice system to the opening of museums. This was long way removed from the bullionist straw man that Adam Smith's would direct his invective against in book IV of the *Wealth of Nations*. It was however very much an approach to 'the science of a statesman or legislator' (Smith 1776, iv.i, p. 428) with which he disagreed at a philosophical and methodological level. Indeed, Postlethwayt's and Forbonnais's 'art and science of political commerce' represented an alternative approach.

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<sup>126</sup> The reasons given by Schumpeter (1954: 174) for his low opinion of Forbonnais are particularly instructive: '[Forbonnais] is the prototype of the 'useful' or 'sound' economist of whom the public approves. No historian will ever sing his praises; for the historian who is interested only in what policy a man is for or against will not be satisfied and will put down Forbonnais as an eclectic without originality; and the historian who looks for contributions to our analytic apparatus will also be dissatisfied, for he will not find it, and he will notice clumsy and pedestrian behavior whenever Forbonnais did venture upon theoretical ice.'

<sup>127</sup> For Forbonnais on this point see Dziembowski 1998 and Hont 2008: 273.

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**Appendix B.** Borrowings from Forbonnais's *Elémens du commerce* (1754) in Postlethwayt's *Britain's Commercial Interest explained and improved* (1757)

<b>Britain's Commercial Interest explained and improved</b>		<b>Of which pages..</b>	<b>...are taken from <i>Elémens...</i></b>
Address to the Duke of Rutland	Volume 1 iii-xviii		
Dissertation I Of the Landed Interest	pp.1-55		
II Production of England compared to Scotland and Ireland	56-73		
III Summary principles agriculture	74-98	74-85	Vol. I, 202-233
IV Farther considerations about granaries	99-125	99-125	Vol. I, 150-202
V continued political light	126-142	126-142	Vol. I, 104-142
VI Farther considerations Ireland	143-167	153-167	Vol. II, 21-49
VII Productions that should be cultivated	168-193		
VIII continued	194-212		
IX Further motives for exciting agriculture, the Chinese; philosophical remarks	213-244		
X Landed and trading interest	245-267		
XI Union GB and Ireland considered	268-290		
XII Farther considered	291-334		
XIII continued	335-376		
XIV continued	377-400		
XV Isle of Man	401-420		
XVI Succinct view American plantations	421-460		
XVII continued	461-480		
XVIII further considered	481-500		
XIX review conduct France	501-548		
Address to marquis of Granby	Volume 2, iii-vi		
XX System of Policy of France	1-111		
XXI French African Trade	112-156		
XXII Another view	157-172		
XXIII French East Indies Trade	173-199		
XXIV English African Trade	200-229		
XXV Farther Considerations	230-273		
XXVI Increase naval power France and Spain	274-304		
XXVII European commerce of France	305-317		
XXVIII Navigation and fisheries	318-338	318-338	Vol. I, 343-381
XXIX Stationing convoys	339-343		
XXX ill Policy of insuring enemy ships	344-352		
XXXI How long will France continue war	353-365		
XXXII Some general maxims commerce	366-391	366-391	Vol. I, 44-89
XXXIII Of arts and manufactories	392-427	392-427	Vol. I, 261-302, 308-342
XXXIV Holland change of Policy	428-461		
XXXV conduct of Spain	462-506		
XXXVI alliances	507-524		
XXXVII General principles of the balance of trade	525-551	525-544	Vol. II, 310-347