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The Silk Interest and the Fiscal-Military State

William Farrell

From the 1680s to the 1780s the textile industries in Britain received an unprecedented level of state protection and incentives. Producers of woollens, worsteds, linens and silks all won legislation that banned competing foreign imports from entering the domestic market, favourable duties on raw material imports, bounties to encourage exports, and measures to prevent tools and artisans from leaving the country.¹ Indeed Ralph Davis argued that such was the extent of this support, that the linen and silk industries in Britain were largely the creation of the protectionism introduced between 1680 and 1720.² The textile industries stand out as the only manufacturing sector to receive this kind of sustained protection and attention.³ Raymond Sickinger sees the policy objectives and their rationalisation as revealing a classic 'mercantilist' framework. Legislation was designed to protect Britain's manufacturing base from foreign competition, and to stop any technical advantages the country had from falling into the hands of rivals. A recurring justification was the need to provide full employment for the national good.⁴ Recent work by historians has focused on the wider construction of economic regulation in Britain in the period before the Industrial Revolution. For Philip Stern and Carl Wennerlind this has been part of an attempt to rehabilitate the concept of 'mercantilism' as a way of looking at early modern political economy.⁵ For others, such as Perry Gauci and Julian Hoppit, the focus has been on examining how the regulatory system was put in place and operated, and where its influence fell (or did not fall) on Britain's economy. In this view, regulation when it did occur was not driven by an overarching government policy or ideology. It was Parliament, responding to the demands of interest groups, which constructed this system. This was a period of increasing legislative activity in Westminster, the majority of which responded to 'particular' or local issues.⁶ Instead of establishing bodies supervising particular sectors, most legislation focused on using customs and excise duties to better protect and encourage domestic production.⁷

¹ N.B. Harte, 'Protection and the English Linen Trade' in *Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann*, eds Harte and Ponting (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), pp.74-112; David J. Jeremy, 'Damming the Flood: British Government Efforts to Check the Outflow of Technicians and Machinery, 1780-1843.' *The Business History Review*, 51, 1 (1977): 1-34; P. O'Brien, T Griffiths, and P. Hunt, 'Political Components of the Industrial Revolution: Parliament and the English Textile Industry, 1660 - 1774.' *Economic History Review*, 44, 3 (1991): 395-405; Tim Keirn, 'Parliament, Legislation and the Regulation of English Textile Industries, 1689-1714' in *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750*, eds. Lee Davison et al, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp.1-24; Raymond L. Sickinger, 'Regulation or Ruination: Parliament's Consistent Pattern of Mercantilist Regulation of the English Textile Trade, 1660-1800.' *Parliamentary History*, 19, 2 (2000): 211-232.

² Ralph Davis, 'The Rise of Protection in England, 1689-1786.' *The Economic History Review*, 19, 2 (1966): 309, 316.

³ Julian Hoppit, 'The Nation, the State, and the First Industrial Revolution.' *The Journal of British Studies*, 50, 2 (2012): 317-318.

⁴ Sickinger, 'Regulation or Ruination': 212, 230-232.

⁵ Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶ Hoppit, 'Patterns of Parliamentary Legislation, 1660-1800.' *The Historical Journal*, 39, 1 (1996): 109-31.

⁷ Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapters five and six; Gauci, ed. *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Hoppit, 'The Nation, the State, and the First Industrial Revolution'. Although for an example of more direct intervention in

Historians have tended to see excise duties as being more important and effective than customs duties. This follows current understandings of the fiscal-military state more broadly, which give greater weight to the role of the excise service. The contribution of customs duties to national revenues, for example, had fallen from a third in 1675-1685 to a quarter by the 1770s. In contrast, excise duties increased their contribution from 36% of revenues in 1685 to 56% by the 1770s.⁸ In *The Sinews of Power* John Brewer saw the excise as being far more effective than the customs in carrying out its work.⁹ William Ashworth also argues that the excise was the more important arm of the revenue service than the customs. Not only did it contribute more in revenue, but it played an important role within the domestic economy, in both consumption and production.¹⁰ For Michael Braddick, the main expansion of the functions and responsibilities of the customs had taken place by the 1690s, with no fundamental change taking place in the eighteenth century. The additions of duties, offices, and ports created a confusing system that continued to employ a significant number of sinecurists.¹¹

The relationship between the silk interest and the fiscal state provides a good case study to test some of these assumptions, which have mainly been based on overviews of the revenue service or of Parliamentary activity. Certainly the silk industry shows the importance of the textile interests and their ability to influence Parliament. Within textiles, silk producers seem to have been particularly well favoured. Although historians focus on the legislation enacted at the turn of the eighteenth century, Parliament continued to pass or renew bans on imported silks into the 1780s and these remained on the statute book up to the 1820s. Between 1740 and 1750 silk exports received the second highest amount of expenditure through the bounty system.¹² From 1773 the silk industry in London also had statutory regulation on wages. Legislation was passed that gave the power to set piece rates to local magistrates, and this was revised in 1792 and 1811.¹³ In this period one can see the emergence of a 'silk interest', following a pattern across the sector. Interest groups representing textile manufacturers lobbied Parliament, particularly in periods when they faced increased competition, producing flurries of Bills and Acts. MPs for areas with significant textile industries felt pressure from outside to legislate in the 'right' way.¹⁴ The silk industry in London formed such an interest group, using similar tactics and arguments, with good political connections, and had much success in securing the legislation it wanted. Although it was the smaller of the main textile sectors, it received a good deal of attention from Parliament, and the

the textile industries see John Styles, "Spinners and the Law: Regulating Yarn Standards in the English Worsted Industries, 1550-1800." *Textile History*, 44, 2 (2013): 145-70.

⁸ William Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-1845*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.5.

⁹ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), pp.88-134.

¹⁰ Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, p.6, 44.

¹¹ M. J. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.), pp.49-64.

¹² Admittedly dwarfed by that paid out on corn exports (85.4% on corn; 6.4% on silks). Julian Hoppit, 'Bounties, the Economy and the State in Britain, 1689-1800' in *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850*, ed. Gauci, pp.143-144.

¹³ Joanna Innes, 'Regulating Wages in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century England: Arguments in Context' in *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850*, ed. Gauci, pp.201-202.

¹⁴ Perry Gauci, 'Introduction' in *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850*, ed. Gauci, pp.8-12; O'Brien et al. 'Political Components of the Industrial Revolution': 397-398.

state more generally. This was partly due to the strength of its lobbying efforts, but also because of the high status and value of silk.

All this legislation created work for the revenue service, the enforcer of the fiscal side of the fiscal-military state. What had begun in 1690 with new duties on Asian and other imported silks had developed over the eighteenth century to an outright ban on almost all types of imported silks. In 1700 Parliament moved against wrought silks and stuffs mixed with Asian silks; in 1706 it banned French *alamodes*, lustrings, ribbons and laces. All foreign gold and silver lace had been prohibited by 1749. All foreign wrought silks and velvets were outlawed in 1765, as well as ready-made silk garments and accessories. Punishments also changed: those found guilty of illegally importing silks could be fined £100 and have all apparel seized.¹⁵ By 1782 Parliament had prohibited the distribution and use of over 20 types of imported silks and silk mixes in Britain.¹⁶ This followed the same trajectory as the duties and restrictions on imported printed cottons and muslins. Historians have been sceptical of the enforcement of these types of prohibitions, responsibility for which lay with the customs. There was a large black market in the eighteenth century centred on tea, tobacco and brandy.¹⁷ The customs found it difficult to police a contraband trade that involved both substantial merchants, including the East India Companies, and many thousands of small time fishermen and hawkers.¹⁸ It is easy to find complaints in the archive about the corruption and collusion of revenue officers with smugglers.¹⁹ It is also thought that the customs was not very effective in its role concerning textile imports. Imported textiles were different from the contraband groceries in that they ended up being prohibited from being worn and used in the domestic market, rather than having high duties place on them. The work by Beverley Lemire and Giorgio Riello on Indian cottons in Europe argues that the bans were not seriously enforced noting, for example, the few successful prosecutions for wearing Indian cottons in Britain and France. Michael Kwass' work on the contraband trade in France shows calicos to have been an important commodity for smugglers.²⁰ There is less work on silks, although Natalie Rothstein and Susan North both assume a similar situation.²¹

¹⁵ Sickinger, 'Regulation or Ruination': 225, 227.

¹⁶ See the list in 'Reports from the committee on illicit practices used in defrauding the revenue', *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons vol. 11*, (1783 & 1784), Appendix No.1:292.

¹⁷ W. A. Cole, 'Trends in Eighteenth-Century Smuggling,' *The Economic History Review*, 10, 3 (1958): 395-410; Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, 'Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784,' *The American Historical Review*, 74 (1968), pp. 44-73; L. M. Cullen, *Anglo-Irish Trade, 1660-1800* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1968), pp. 139-55; Robert C. Nash, 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade,' *The Economic History Review*, 35, 3 (1982): 354-372; Paul Muskett, 'English Smuggling in the Eighteenth Century' (PhD thesis, Open University, 1996).

¹⁸ H.V. Bowen, "'So Alarming An Evil: Smuggling, Pilfering and the East India Company, 1750-1810,' *International Journal of Maritime History*, 14, 1 (2002): 1-31; Gavin Daly, 'English Smugglers, the Channel, and the Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1814,' *The Journal of British Studies*, 46, 1 (2012): 30-46.

¹⁹ E.g. Arthur Lyon Cross, ed. *Eighteenth Century Documents Relating to the Royal Forests, the Sheriffs and Smuggling Selected from the Shelburne Manuscripts in the William L. Clements Library* (New York: Macmillan, 1928.), pp.246, 247, 252-255.

²⁰ Beverly Lemire, 'Fashioning Cottons: Asian Trade, Domestic Industry and Consumer Demand, 1660-1780' in *The Cambridge History of Western Textile*, vol. 1, ed. D. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.502-509; Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: the fabric that made the modern world* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2013), pp.121-124; Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp.41-68.

²¹ N.A.K. Rothstein, 'The Silk Industry in London, 1702-66' (MA Thesis, University of London, 1961), p.455; Susan North, 'The Physical Manifestation of an Abstraction: A Pair of 1750s Waistcoat Shapes,' *Textile History*, 39, 1 (2008): 92-104.

There is a tension here however. If the customs were inefficient and the black economy grew, then how could an industry such as silk survive, even expand, under protectionism (and vice versa)? Walsh's work on the success of Irish fiscal system may make historians of Britain pause. In Ireland it was the customs that raised the majority of the revenue not the excise. More importantly for this chapter, the Irish customs service was proactive in seeking to combat smuggling, partly in response to pressure from the woollen interest in England.²² This chapter argues that there was more to the relationship between the silk interest and the state than lobbying Parliament. Manufacturers and key institutions of the fiscal state often collaborated with each other, with some success. Much of this work concerned prohibitions rather than collecting duties, but the final objective was a successful industry that would contribute to national prosperity, and therefore to state revenues. From the 1690s once each piece of legislation or new bounty was secured the silk industry did not sit back, but worked with Customs and Excise to see the measures implemented properly. Silk workers, their institutions and the customs worked together in quite concrete ways to improve the position of silk manufacturing during the 1700s. Both sides benefited from this collaboration in practical ways, and it helped maintain the political connections necessary for further lobbying and legislation, if they were needed.

Securing and enforcing prohibition

The 'silk interest' is used here to describe the producers of silk, including manufacturers of silk yarn ('throwsters' or 'throwers'), dyers of silk, and those who wove silk.²³ It does not include silk mercers as there were long standing tensions between producers and retailers of silk, exacerbated by the belief that mercers sold contraband silks. Silks were being produced on a significant scale from the 1670s in London and Canterbury. From the 1720s new sites of production emerged in Derby making silk yarn, in Coventry where ribbons were made, in Nottingham with silk stockings, and Macclesfield and Congleton where silk was thrown and plain silks were made.²⁴ London remained the largest centre, certainly in terms of employment: there were thought to be 10, 000 silk looms in early eighteenth century London, which Schwarz estimates employed 40 to 50, 000 people. Silk was a very large employer in the parishes that made up East London (Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Mile End) where it accounted for an estimated 54% of adult male occupations in 1770.²⁵ When one includes the wage regulations of 1773 specifically for Spitalfields and not enacted for other places making silk, London was the most protected of the silk centres. No wonder given not only its size and status, but proximity to Parliament and the Court, a major patron. As the

²² Patrick A. Walsh, 'The Fiscal State in Ireland, 1691–1769.' *The Historical Journal*, 56, 3 (2013): 640-641, 651.

²³ Silk can be usefully compared with the brewing and salt interests, who also coordinated their lobbying of Parliament and utilised local political connections. See Peter Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp.347-348, 366-367; Edward Hughes, *Studies in Administration and Finance 1558-1825: With Special Reference to the History of Salt Taxation in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934), pp.360-365.

²⁴ Natalie Rothstein, 'Silk: The Industrial Revolution and After' in D Jenkins, ed., *The Cambridge history of western textiles*, vol. 1, pp.792-793; Gail Malmgreen, *Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield, 1750-1835* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1985).

²⁵ L Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation: entrepreneurs, labour force, and living conditions, 1700-1850*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), p.36; idem, 'Occupations and Income in Late Eighteenth-Century East London.' *East London Papers*, 14, 2 (1972): 92-93. 2, 470 people were employed in silk throwing in Macclesfield in 1762; 'Report of Committee on the Silk Industry', *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol.30 (1765): 219.

main port for the import and distribution of raw materials the capital was of great importance to the functioning of the new centres.²⁶ Therefore it played the leading role in lobbying Parliament and meeting with the revenue. Silk manufacturers in Macclesfield, for example, looked towards London to coordinate lobbying efforts.²⁷

Much of the lobbying and liaison activity in the London were organised by the Worshipful Company of Weavers (a Livery Company or guild). Against the trend of many other London Livery Companies, the Weavers' Company remained active in issues concerning the industry until the 1770s.²⁸ Rothstein partly attributed this to the presence and activity of Huguenot masters within the Company.²⁹ The Weavers' Company represented weavers in all textiles but from the late seventeenth century became especially associated with silk weavers. Davis was wrong to say that interest groups around silk were only formed in the aftermath of the 1690s.³⁰ During the reign of Charles I members of the Company had been involved in giving evidence on abuses in making silk lace and in prosecuting a case of illegal importation of ribbons and laces.³¹ The Company spent £132 in 1671-2 and £233 in 1676-7 in "attending the Parliament".³² The Company coordinated its activities with other guilds on securing and enforcing this legislation, such as the Company of Weavers in Canterbury and the Gold and Silver Wire-Drawers. Certainly, there was not always unity. There were disagreements between weavers and the throwsters over duties. Throwsters wanted protection from some imports of foreign thrown silk, whereas weavers wanted cheap thrown and raw silk.³³ However, there are several examples of alliances. The Company of Weavers in Canterbury gave the Weavers' Company their "moiety of disbursement at parliament £62 2s" to support further activities.³⁴ In 1719 the Company sent copies of their petition against calicos to the weavers in Norwich and the Throwsters and Dyers Companies in the capital.³⁵ The £274 spent on campaigning between 1719 and 1721 including engaging Daniel Defoe as a pamphleteer; he published the *Manufacturer* to argue the anti-calico case.³⁶ The Company remained active after 1720 successfully opposing the re-introduction of sumptuary legislation in 1743.³⁷ The Board of Trade consulted with the Company over the Eden Treaty with France in 1786, listening to its objections

²⁶ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p.10.

²⁷ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p.9.

²⁸ The classic statement of the decline of the London guilds remains J. R. Kellett, 'The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trade in London.' *The Economic History Review*, 10, 3 (1958): 381–94; for the revisionist view see the essays in Wallis and Gadd, eds., *Guilds, Society & Economy in London 1450-1800* (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research in association with Guildhall Library, 2002).

²⁹ Rothstein, 'Huguenots in the English Silk Industry in the Eighteenth Century' in *Huguenots in Britain and Their French Background, 1550-1800: Contributions to the Historical Conference of the Huguenot Society of London, 24-25 September 1985*, ed. Scouloudi (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); Rothstein, 'Huguenot Master Weavers: Exemplary Englishmen, 1700-c.1750' in *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland, and Colonial America, 1550-1750*, ed. Vigne (Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland & Sussex Academic Press, 2001), pp. 160–74.

³⁰ Davis, 'The Rise of Protection in England, 1689-1786': 309-310.

³¹ Alfred Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company, 1600-1970* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972), pp.134-135.

³² Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, p.136-7.

³³ Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, pp.139-140.

³⁴ Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, p.137.

³⁵ Rothstein, 'The Calico Campaign of 1719–21.' *East London Papers*, 7, 1 (1964): 9.

³⁶ Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, p.298.

³⁷ Rothstein, *Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century: in the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p.24.

and removing silks from the treaty.³⁸ The Act against foreign silks and velvets was regularly renewed for the rest of the century, with the Company leading appeals for extension.³⁹

The Weavers' Company not only wanted to secure legislation, but also to see it enforced. It found ways of assisting and complimenting the work of revenue officers. Members of the Company were encouraged to keep the Court informed of breaches of the prohibitions on the wearing and use of foreign textiles. With this information the Company sought out arrests and prosecutions, carried out in collaboration with customs officers. It was also prepared to finance informing and prosecutions. In 1677-8 the Clerk of the Company was paid £100 for seizure made in foreign ribbands and in attending Parliament. In 1689-90 £235 was paid to the Clerk for "Seizing Silks and attending Parliament". £5 was paid to Mr Harrison "who seized the 7 horse loads of French goods."⁴⁰ In 1701 the Court was told that retailers of East India goods were storing textiles in two warehouses without the knowledge of the Commissioner of Customs.⁴¹ The Committee set up to investigate smuggling of silks in 1713 collected £450 to support its efforts.⁴² Weavers also looked to the Company to provide a lead. Soon after the passing of the Calico Acts, master weavers asked the Company for advice on how best to enforce the clauses prohibiting the use of Indian silks for apparel furnishings.⁴³ As well as gathering or sharing information, the Weavers' Company took on a publicity role. It placed adverts in newspapers to publicise the clauses in the Acts prohibiting the wearing of East India silks, chintz and calicos and appealed for informers to come forward. They warned the public that, "Every person's house, on Information, is liable to be searched, and such goods seized as prohibited goods."⁴⁴ Informers would receive half or a third of the penalty paid by the guilty party. The Company also offered refunds for people who had bought printed calicos gowns in the preceding six months, in exchange for the return of the items to the drapers.⁴⁵ These measures did not inspire a wave of prosecutions, although the Company did pursue some individuals at its own expense. It took two years to bring the cases to trial and ended with stale mate in the courts. Lawyers advised the Company to accept an offer from the defendants to drop the charges with no cost to either side.⁴⁶

During the crisis years of the 1760s – which saw a downturn in trade and a serious wage dispute between masters and journeymen⁴⁷ - the Company again began to seek prosecutions. Adverts were once again placed in newspapers encouraging seizures of contraband and offering rewards of five guineas to informers.⁴⁸ This time enforcement focused both on those smuggling silks as well as consumers. James Johnson, a company official, was instructed, "To take into Consideration the

³⁸ Marie Donaghay, 'Textiles and the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786.' *Textile History*, 13, 2 (1982): 205–24; Rothstein, *Silk designs of the eighteenth century*, p.25;

³⁹ The Company applied to renew the Act in 1776, 1789, 1795, and 1802. See London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Worshipful Company of Weavers 'Court minute books', LMA MS04655/017, (II), f. 266; LMA MS04655/018, f. 121, f. 280; LMA MS04655/019, f. 88.

⁴⁰ Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, p.137.

⁴¹ LMA MS04655/011, f.7.

⁴² Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, p.298.

⁴³ LMA MS04655/012, f.32.

⁴⁴ *Daily Advertiser*, 31 July 1745.

⁴⁵ *Daily Advertiser*, 31 July 1745.

⁴⁶ LMA MS04655/015, f.272.

⁴⁷ Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Vintage, 2013), pp.240-247.

⁴⁸ LMA MS04655/016, ff.339-340.

Vast increase in the public Use and Wear of Chintz and Printed Callicos and India Silks plain painted figures & flowered; and to put the Laws enforce against all such Transgressors”. Once again informers were requested to come forward, although only one person was prosecuted. Robert Phippe, an auctioneer, was sued for twenty pounds for, “selling a Chintz Bed and Furniture at a Sale of the late Godard Hunger’s Effects”. Phippe won the case, after it became clear that the bed was not made of chintz.⁴⁹ In May 1764 the Company proposed to the customs that fines collected from prosecutions be paid into a fund for future investigations.⁵⁰ In 1777 the Company received information that “some Foreign Wrought Silk had been imported” and appointed a committee to enforce the Act once again. This time, however, the committee was instructed that it was not to put the Company at any expense. This may have been a sign that poor finances began to hold back attempts at enforcement via legal action, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁵¹

The Company also acted to enforce legislation on the export of weaving tools. It was illegal for an artisan to leave Britain and Ireland and work their trade overseas; to ‘seduce’ an artisan from Britain to a foreign country for work; and to export manufacturing tools used in the production of textiles.⁵² In 1749 the Court was informed that people were going to Spain with looms and tools.⁵³ The Company’s officers gathered further information on the agents organising the move. Several weavers were arrested and the Company agreed to pay for the costs of prosecution.⁵⁴ Alarmed by this episode, the Weavers’ Company pressed for the updating of the legislation to prevent ‘seducing’ weavers and tools into leaving the country.⁵⁵ Master weavers now took it upon themselves to police the act. John Peters was reimbursed five guineas for attempting to stop a group of foreigners buying weaving tools and sending them abroad. He chased them all the way to Gravesend but the ship had sailed before he could arrest them.⁵⁶ A Company official interviewed a Leeds broadcloth weaver who had just returned from Spain, who confirmed that weaving tools were being sent from England and Ireland to Spain. This information was passed onto the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Earl of Holderness.⁵⁷

The Weavers’ Company acted in this way partly because it felt pressure from its own members and from journeymen to enforce prohibitions. Master weavers were often in agreement with the aims of the workforce, but were worried that the means of expression used by silk workers could be turned against their own authority. These were uneasy alliances. London weavers became notorious for their large, often disorderly and sometime violent demonstrations. These included not only protests against foreign competition but also wage disputes where intimidatory tactics were used, and support for radical political figures such as John Wilkes.⁵⁸ During the Calico Crisis

⁴⁹ LMA MS04655/017 (I), f.62.66.

⁵⁰ The National Archives, UK (TNA), Treasury Papers (T) 1/434/182.

⁵¹ LMA MS04655/017 (II), f.284.

⁵² Jeremy, ‘Damming the Flood’: 2.

⁵³ LMA MS04655/015, f.327.

⁵⁴ LMA MS04655/015, f.330.

⁵⁵ LMA MS04655/015, ff.349 -350.

⁵⁶ LMA MS04665/016, ff.13-14.

⁵⁷ LMA MS04665/016, f.26.

⁵⁸ White, *London in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.240-247; M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France*

journeymen had attacked women seen wearing calicos in the street. They also targeted master weavers who allowed their wives to wear printed cottons and blamed the disorder on the fact that “the poor working People have certainly been much exasperated to see such an evil Example among Master-Weavers, Throwsters, Silkmen, Dyers and mercers.”⁵⁹ Within seven years of the Calico Acts journeymen weavers were complaining about the use and wear of printed cottons at a time of bad trade.⁶⁰ In 1745 journeymen presented a petition to the Weavers’ Company complaining of “the great Increase of late Years in the Using and Wear of printed Callicos, Chints and prohibited East Indian Silks”⁶¹

The Company resolved to enforce the Calico Act but asked the weavers “to behave themselves quietly and not Commit any Violence which might tend to break the peace”. The crowd was told that any information which they might have should be passed on to the Company’s Clerk.⁶² In 1764, a petition of “a Great number of Journeymen” was presented to the Company. The weavers “were Assembled in the Hall in a very great number and in the street about the Hall Gate” and demanded the Company make an application to Parliament “to Hinder the Exorbitant Increase and Wear of Foreign Wrought Silks”.⁶³ The journeymen offered to put up £100 towards the cost of a Bill. The Company agreed to seek favourable legislation but warned a delegation of the men that “it could only be from peaceable and orderly Behaviour, and Obedience to the laws, they could hope to be looked upon, and expert Relief, as Good Subjects”.⁶⁴

The delegation of six or eight journeymen promised that the crowd would return peacefully back to Spitalfields and that “The Deputys promised to Engage as much as they could a quiet behaviour in future”.⁶⁵ Some journeymen did take up the demand from the Company for information on people breaking the statutes. Five guineas was paid to Thomas Jones, journeymen, in 1768 “for his Service in procuring a Seizure of a Foreign Coat and Waistcoat” in Grosvenor Square.⁶⁶ The following year three guineas was paid to James King for information on Indian silks which had then been seized by customs officials; thirty guineas was paid to William Ward and twenty guineas to John Peck for “giving Information against and procuring Several Persons to be Convicted of Wearing Printed, painted Stained or Dyed Callicos”.⁶⁷ A “great number” of weavers were reported at the trial of three mercers who were found guilty of importing French silks in 1767.⁶⁸ Some could be too zealous in their desire to help. It was wrongly reported in Spitalfields that Daniel Alavoin and Co. were dealing in India Goods clandestinely; the weavers who made the allegation, Thomas

and England, 1730-1848 (London: Serif, 2005), p.51, p.54, p.67-77; *idem, Wilkes and Liberty: A social study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

⁵⁹ *The Journeymen Weavers Answer to their Masters Advice, appendix to Claudius Rey, The Weaver’s True Case* (2nd ed. London, 1719), p.48.

⁶⁰ LMA MS04655/012, f.186.

⁶¹ LMA MS04655/015, f.226.

⁶² LMA MS04655/015, f.226.

⁶³ LMA MS04655/016, ff.336-337.

⁶⁴ LMA MS04655/016, ff.336-337.

⁶⁵ LMA MS04655/016, ff.336-337.

⁶⁶ LMA MS04655/017, f.83.

⁶⁷ LMA MS04655/017, ff.102-103.

⁶⁸ *London Evening Post*, 2 – 5 May 1767.

Prigg, had to retract it publicly.⁶⁹ None the less, master weavers and the Company encouraged informing as an alternative to rioting and victimisation. It became part of a strategy of presenting an orderly and loyal image of the industry, and collaboration with the customs helped to serve a political purpose as well as a practical one. As Randall notes, in the textile industries campaigns against imports succeed far more often than protests against machinery. Campaigns against imports were always on a better footing because they could unite workers and masters in a common cause. Moreover, they could present their particular problem as one about national prosperity.⁷⁰

Concern about enforcement did not just come from weavers. Customs officers were also worried as they found the prohibitions and duties concerning textile imports hard to oversee. Customs officers reported problems in enforcing the prohibitions on exporting tools and artisans. Identifying a skilled worker embarking from the dock proved very difficult, as the only visible signs of their occupation were personal equipment which could be concealed or not carried at all.⁷¹ The range of duties, some listed in the Book of Rates others applied *ad valorem*, were difficult to calculate and collect. *Ad valorem* duties relied on information supplied by merchants, who had an incentive not to be honest. Duties varied according to the commodity's country of origin, and its dimensions, quality and condition.⁷² Ashworth has argued that as indirect taxation grew, Customs and Excise increased the amount of assessment that it had to undertake and this encouraged national standardisation of weights, dimensions and containers. However, this was led by the excise service, which also became responsible for regulating the quality of some goods and trying to stamp out adulteration.⁷³ In textiles, the drive for standardisation was concentrated on the regulation of domestic yarn counts.⁷⁴ The nature of early modern textiles, including silks, also posed further problems. There was a large range of silks of different textile types, many designed to look similar to each other, with diverse geographical origins. Whilst in other areas the revenue worked towards standardisation of the units of assessment, this proved impossible in silks.

Instead, customs officers had to rely heavily on personal judgment to decide whether the fabrics they examined in the customs house were banned or what duties to apply. There are many cases of officers being deceived by merchants who had deliberately mislabelled their products to avoid duties. Early modern ideas of originality were less rigid than modern ones and competition between rivals often bred similarity in product design.⁷⁵ There was also no branding or copyrighting in textiles in this period and nomenclature was used loosely: 'Indian' could mean all textiles imported by the East India Company and European designs produced in the style of Asian

⁶⁹ See document 56 in 'A Collection of Papers for and against a Bill to Prohibit the Wear and Use of Dyed, Printed & painted Calicoes in the Year 1720 & 1721', A.1.3. No 64. Guildhall Library, London.

⁷⁰ Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.249-250.

⁷¹ Jeremy, 'Damming the Flood': 7-8.

⁷² Elizabeth Evelynola Hoon, *The organization of the English customs system, 1696-1786*, (D. Appleton-Century Company: New York, 1938), pp.29.-33.

⁷³ Ashworth, *Customs and Excise*, pp.261-316.

⁷⁴ John Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London.' *Past & Present*, 168 (2000): 159.

⁷⁵ Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London': 130; Maxine Berg, 'From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain.' *The Economic History Review*, 55, 1 (2002): 2-3.

ones.⁷⁶ Indeed, on this basis the silk manufacturer William Brunskill thought that smuggling from France had been a good thing because “it supplied us with patterns and styles that we immediately copied.”⁷⁷ Once in London, foreign silks could be reused and this further blurred their identity. Silk dyers, for instance, would re-dye Asian silks for customers: in 1769 a silk dyer reported a variety of silk stolen from their workshop including “a blue figured Peeling or India Silk half Ell wide”.⁷⁸ For modern day curators telling European wrought silks apart can be hard without a written province.⁷⁹ Many examples that date from the eighteenth century are labelled ‘French or English’ in museum catalogues, so similar are the designs, weaves and finishes.⁸⁰

Even retailers who dealt in textiles felt uncertain about particular items. Mercers found ‘plain silks’ of European origin - i.e. those with of a single colour without decoration or pattern - hard to tell apart. Germaine Lavie, a mercer, was confident that he could distinguish French and English silks and Italian damasks from English ones, but not Italian plain silks from the English equivalent. Robert Fleetwood also said that he had “often been deceived in plain Mantua Silks.”⁸¹ A satire in the *Public Advertiser* published in 1765 played on these concerns. It imagined ‘Ebenezer Loom’ from Spitalfields placing an advert for his imitation French silks, silk stockings and Bengal handkerchiefs. He was satisfied “that not even the Ambassador himself could discover any Difference between his and the Manufactory of France – except in the Price.”⁸²

These ambiguities about identifying textiles obviously posed problems for the Customs and Excise. The prosecution against John Hooker for illegal importing was stopped after it was found that his ‘foreign cambricks’ were in fact from Scotland.⁸³ The customs officer Robert Trott said that he found it “very difficult to distinguish French from Italian Silks”.⁸⁴ In the mid-1760s, French silks were being imported into Britain as ‘Italian’ via Leghorn.⁸⁵ Customs could do little to create international standards in units of measurements or quality of textiles. For its own benefit at least, it did have to attempt some order. Warehousing of goods to be examined by revenue officers was first introduced specially for Indian and Persian wrought silks in 1700. Housing all the items to be assessed under one roof was intended to make the process more efficient by reducing

⁷⁶ Riello, ‘The Globalization of Cotton Textiles’, pp. 276-278; Anna Jolly, ‘A Group of *Chinoiserie* Silks with Woven Inscriptions’, pp.115-126 & Sjoukje Colenbrander and Clare Browne, ‘*Indiennes*: Chinoiserie Silks Woven in Amsterdam’, pp.127-128 both in *A taste for the exotic*; Colenbrander and Browne, ‘*Indiennes*: Chinoiserie Silks Woven in Amsterdam’, p.129.

⁷⁷ ‘Report from Select Committee on the Silk Trade’, *House of Commons Papers; Reports of Committees* (1832): 447.

⁷⁸ *Public Advertiser*, November 14 1769.

⁷⁹ However, telling Chinese and India silks part from European examples is easier. Leanna Lee-Whitman, ‘The Silk Trade: Chinese Silks and the British East India Company.’ *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17, 1 (1982): 21.

⁸⁰ See, for example, the satin damask with silver thread in the V & A collection made c.1700-1730 described as “Russia (possibly, made), England, Great Britain (possibly, made) France (possibly, made)” Museum number: T.81-1930 <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O167928/woven-silk-ciccani-marko/>; or the blue silk coat and breeches made c.1780 and described as ‘French or English’ in National Trust Collections, Attingham Park, Shropshire, Nos. 609811.1 & 609811.2. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/609811.1>, <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/609811.2>.

⁸¹ ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol.30 (1766): 726.

⁸² *Public Advertiser*, May 17 1765.

⁸³ TNA Customs Papers (CUST) 28/2, ff.431-432.

⁸⁴ ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1765): 209.

⁸⁵ K.H. Ledward, ed. *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 12: January 1764 - December 1767* (London: H.M.S.O., 1936), pp.368, 372.

opportunities for fraud or pilfering.⁸⁶ Specialist officers were appointed to take over difficult tasks. Just as wines were referred to a Surveyor and Wine Taster in London,⁸⁷ so too were silks dealt with by an ‘examiner, searcher and stamper’ of silks.⁸⁸

Seized contraband was stamped by customs officers to clearly mark the silk as contraband, alerting any potential retailer or consumer to the objects true origins.⁸⁹ Producers also had their own schemes along similar lines. Some manufacturers of silks stockings, gloves and mitts, were stamping their goods in the mid-1760s. At the Select Committee of 1765 there was discussion about the feasibility of establishing a national ‘Stamp House’ to function like an assay office for silk.⁹⁰ However, a silk stocking manufacturer worried that if it became a requirement to stamp his products as English “the French might easily counterfeit it.”⁹¹ An informal scheme did take off for silk handkerchiefs. An advert placed by the Committee of Manufacturers of Silk Handkerchief reminded the public that English silk handkerchiefs made in the Indian style “bear the King’s Stamp (which is the figure of the Crown) at the end of the piece, and the purchasers are cautioned, for their own safety, to see that the pieces are thus stamped”.⁹²

However, even these measures were not full proof. This was another area where silk weavers could work with Customs and Excise. Items that had been made using different production techniques were easier to tell part, so manufacturers were in a good position to provide expertise. The hosier John Morice thought that English and French silk stockings were “easily distinguishable” from each other, as were mitts and gloves, because the French did not use knitting frames.⁹³ Members of the Company rejected a proposal of Charles I in 1630 that they should help surveyors investigate abuses in silk dyeing production.⁹⁴ But when the Commissioner of Customs was asking for their help in 1672 over the smuggling of ribbands and laces, eighteen members of the Company were recommended to the customs. In 1674 the customs wanted to appoint two men to the positions of searcher and seizer of prohibited and smuggled manufacturers; they choose a weaver and a mercer recommended by the Company.⁹⁵ Weavers also helped the excise in their work. In one case the excise dealt with a merchant wanted to claim an export bounty for 64lbs of silk mixed with gold and silver and 34 lbs of silk pieces. The claim was met with suspicion by the excise officer. He found them to be made up of 234 ‘remnants’. Remnants were re-used pieces of silk and a trade had developed in remnants of foreign silks. In this case the officer disputed whether a bounty could be claimed on them, partly as it was suspected that some of the remnants were foreign made. “Several eminent weavers” were brought in to give their opinion. They said that all of the mixed

⁸⁶ Hoon, *The organization of the English customs system*, p. 262.

⁸⁷ Hoon, *The organization of the English customs system*, p.33.

⁸⁸ ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1765): 209.

⁸⁹ A pair of French silk waistcoat shapes survive in the V & A collections with the customs stamp attached. They were seized in Dover in the 1750s. See Museum number: T.12&A-1981, V & A collections.

⁹⁰ ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1765): 215.

⁹¹ Evidence of John Morrice, ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1765): 214.

⁹² *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, January 4 1780.

⁹³ ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1765): 214.

⁹⁴ Plummer, *The London Weavers’ Company*, p.135.

⁹⁵ Plummer, *The London Weavers’ Company*, p.135. This worked in the opposite direction to brewing where excise men were recruited as clerks by the larger firms. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830*, p.349.

silks were English but ten of the plain remnants were foreign.⁹⁶ One of the remnants actually had a customs seal on it which had been attached to it when it was imported into London. Trott, the customs officer, confirmed that it was his handwriting on the seal.⁹⁷ Whilst in other areas the revenue drove the trend for standardisation, in silks it often had to rely on the tacit knowledge of those examining the goods. For officers without particular expertise in handling textiles, expert knowledge was sometimes needed. This was another area where silk weavers could work with Customs and Excise to enforce the legislation they had lobbied for. Through this kind of activity representatives of the silk industry helped to enforce the legislation that had been lobbied for and further cemented their relationship with important branches of the state.

Knowledge and design

Silk manufacturers looked to use their close relationship with the Customs and Excise to derive other benefits, most noticeable over industrial design. In 1764 the Company had requested that seized silks be given to them for educational benefit of their members.⁹⁸ The same year Mr Trott told the weavers that he had seized a pattern book of French silks “of all sorts” from some agents working for foreign silk mercers. This book would have been used by the agents to advertise the designs of Lyon weavers and to win orders from customers. The individual silks in it were worth from 3s to £5, and given the total value this is presumably why it had been seized by customs.⁹⁹ Otherwise, it would have been a rather technical breach of the laws against foreign silks, which were designed to prevent silks which could be made up into clothing or linings coming into the country.

There was considerable interest in this pattern book and for good reason. Knowledge of designs and their associated weaving techniques was central to winning the battle against rival centres of production. The competition in export markets between European producers was fought not over price, but over product differentiation and quality. The *Grand Fabrique* in Lyon was much more powerful than the Weavers’ Company, directing the training of designers and protecting industrial secrets. The French mercers also had a superior information network connecting them to the tastes of consumers.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, the London industry did not have formal training of designers or copyright and regulations on designs.¹⁰¹ The timing of concerns about French silks in the early 1760s with the end of the Seven Years War suggests that Britain had been isolated from new French designs and techniques in this area.¹⁰² Not only did the restoration of trade with France lead to more silk coming onto London (legally or not) but silk producers there had made a leap forward in the intervening years in the use of embroidery, gold and silver thread, and silk lace to

⁹⁶ TNA CUST 41/5, ff.34-40.

⁹⁷ TNA CUST 41/5, ff.34-40.

⁹⁸ TNA T 1/434/182.

⁹⁹ LMA MS04655/016, ff.339-340.

¹⁰⁰ Carlo Poni, ‘Fashion as Flexible Production: The Strategies of the Lyon Silk Merchants in the Eighteenth Century’ in *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization*, eds. Sabel and Zeitlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 37–74.

¹⁰¹ N.A.K. Rothstein, “The Silk Industry in London, 1702-66” (MA Thesis, University of London, 1961), p.76.

¹⁰² John Sabatier said that during the Seven Years War that trade had been “very brisk” but French imports had increased once it had ended, ‘Report of Committee on the Silk Industry’, (1766): 724; also Susan North, “The Physical Manifestation of an Abstraction: A Pair of 1750s Waistcoat Shapes.” *Textile History*, 39, 1 (2008): 100

achieve raised decoration.¹⁰³ From the 1730s silks with floral patterns, a key product in the fashion market, had developed the application of raised decorative work, to emphasise the intricate nature of foliage and achieve three dimensional effects. Brocading, a technique applied by the weavers on the loom, was one way of achieving this and was used in Spitalfields and Lyon. From the 1750s the use of extra decorations with thread and other materials moved from the main body of garments to the edges. Trimmings, such as gold braiding, became important for fashionable clothing. Embroidery on waistcoats, aprons and handkerchiefs also became popular between the 1750s and 1780s. As early as 1748 when revenue officers made seizures from several tailors in 1748, they found four bundles of foreign embroideries and thread “gold and silver spun upon silk which was afterwards worked or embroidered with a needle upon woven foreign silks in order to make many waistcoats of”.¹⁰⁴

The book the customs seized contained “several thousand” examples in it, “consisting of Gold and Silver Brocades, Silver Tissues, Flowered Velvets, Brocades, Peruvians, Lutestrings, Clouded and Plain, of all Sorts and Colours, Grogarns, Serges, Tissues, painted sarsens and Sattins etc.” It was the brocades and the use of gold and silver thread that was considered important. The Company was determined to get the book and paid the customs £50. It then drew up a detailed set of rules, as to who would be allowed access the samples. The patterns could be inspected on Wednesday and Thursday, from 10am to 1 pm.¹⁰⁵ A Committee of twelve liverymen had to be present and only six people or less could view the patterns at a time. These people had to be freemen and were required to send a note to the Clerk “who would allocate times according to their Seniority of standing on the Livery”.¹⁰⁶ The Wire drawers’ Company was also instructed to have a member attend the customs house every Tuesday and Friday to inspect the gold and silver lace in the book. The weavers were told to do the same for gold and silver brocades “at the same times”.¹⁰⁷ This was an unexpected, but very useful, product of the collaboration between the silk interest and the customs.

Conclusion

The evidence presented here challenges the view of the customs as inefficient and ineffective. It also suggests that it was not only the Excise that had an important influence in domestic production. Unlike in industries such brewing, where the relationship between brewers and excise men was described as “reluctant” by Peter Mathias, the relationship with the silk industry was a much more positive example of engagement.¹⁰⁸ The silk interest and revenue officers developed a working relationship that benefited both parties. Silk weavers passed on information about breaches of the prohibitions and paid for informers and prosecutions. The central aim was to see

¹⁰³ North, ‘The Physical Manifestation of an Abstraction’: 100.

¹⁰⁴ TNA CUST 41/4, f.31.

¹⁰⁵ The V & A catalogue tentatively suggests that a pattern book in its collection may be the same one. It came from the records of an English silk firm. The book is annotated in French and contains examples of French silks, including brocades and gold and silver thread. See museum number: T.373-1972. V & A Collections.

¹⁰⁶ LMA MS04655/016, f.347.

¹⁰⁷ LMA MS04655/016, f.356.

¹⁰⁸ Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830*, p.361.

the laws that silk manufacturers had lobbied for being implemented. It also helped to demonstrate to those in authority that the silk interest was a serious and legitimate group. As a result, arguing for further legislation was made an easier task. In turn, revenue officers sought advice from representatives of the silk interest in implementing the law. Professional expertise greatly helped in assessing the large, sometimes untrustworthy, range of textiles of diverse origins. By offering their expertise, representatives of the silk interest had another way of helping to see the prohibitions being implemented. Unlike in the areas covered by the excise, standardisation was not possible with textile imports. It was possible, however, to bring some order to these affairs and use expert knowledge to good effect. These working relationships also allowed unexpected windfall opportunities to be taken, as with the turning over of seized French designs to weavers in London. These were not regular occurrences by any means, but when they did occur the benefits, in this case educational, were welcomed by the silk industry. In these ways, silk producers constituted themselves as an active interest group beyond simply petitioning and demonstrating. They sought out practical involvement with the fiscal arm of the fiscal-military state.

For its part, the customs made real efforts to carry out its duties effectively. As with Indian cottons, there were not great waves of prosecutions for wearing and using foreign silks in Britain. However, whilst the black market was real, the decline of the silk industry in Britain (especially in London) clearly came with the move to freer trade in the 1820s and 1860s.¹⁰⁹ Whilst it is impossible to quantify the extent and impact of smuggling, this does suggest that there was enough compliance to the protectionist regime to make it work. The silk interest and the customs service both played an important role in ensuring that regulation worked.

Finally, this also has bearings on our understanding of politics and the nation in the eighteenth century. It has been historians of colonial North America and Ireland who have seen a link between national identity, taxation and consumer goods. ‘Unjust’ taxation on consumer goods became key political flashpoints, as did fears of dependence on imports at the expense of domestic manufacturing. Breen has argued that it was the non-importation campaigns that were at the heart of the emerging political identity of Americans colonists in the 1770s.¹¹⁰ Martyn J. Powell and Padhraig Higgins have shown that the politics of consumption was important in the Irish case too, as in the campaigns by the Volunteers for ‘free trade’ with Britain.¹¹¹ Historians of Britain, such as Linda Colley and Kathleen Wilson, have linked the formation of national identity more to wars, imperial events and religion.¹¹² The case of the silk interest shows how consumer goods could be

¹⁰⁹ Alain Cottureau, ‘The Fate of Fabriques Collectives in the Industrial World: The Silk Industries of Lyon and London, 1800-1850’ in *World of Possibilities* eds. Sabel and Zeitlin, pp.75–152; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Verso, 2013. First published, 1971), p.24, 101.

¹¹⁰ T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹¹ Martyn J. Powell, *The Politics of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

¹¹² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

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important to national politics and policy frameworks in Britain. The same concern about foreign imports damaging home industry and attempts to regulate consumption can be found in London, as in Dublin and Boston. In the British case, however, this was not driven by organised consumers-citizens arguing for the removal of taxation or fairer trade. Instead it was driven by producers of consumer goods arguing for the extension of taxation and regulation, who saw the officials of the fiscal state as allies. Of course, such a situation reflects the division of production and consumption between Britain, Ireland and North America. The effects were similar however: a particular interest helped form the conception of a national one.