

'Bloodsuckers of the Commonwealth': Anti-Monopoly Petitioning in Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England (c. 1590-1625)

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Short abstract

In the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period, monopolies emerged as a crucial tool of crown financial policy. In response, subjects petitioned crown, council, and parliament to lament the changes these grants wrought on their trades and livelihoods. This thesis will offer an analysis of anti-monopoly petitioning activity between 1590-1625. It will demonstrate the vibrancy and sophistication of petitioning in this often-overlooked period, whilst illuminating the important intersection between politics and economics at the turn of the seventeenth century. This economic issue politicised subjects, who turned to petitioning to lament the effects of this intrusive form of prerogative finance. They embraced the opportunities to approach parliament, council, monarch, and even new commissions charged with managing economic petitions. Subjects proved willing to draw on wider discourses in political culture and economic thought as bargaining strategies within petitions designed to further their own economic interests.

This thesis will adopt a case study approach, focusing on the monopolisation of leather, starch, glass, and cloth. It will draw on a range of sources, predominantly manuscript, from such archives as the State Papers and individual livery companies. The role of London's livery and overseas trading companies both as petitioners, and as a source of concerted opposition themselves, will be explored throughout. In addition, the capacity for subjects to organise petitioning activity independently of the auspices of corporate organisation will be shown. By analysing often overlooked petitioning campaigns, the complex alliances between courtiers and artisans made possible in this era of monopolisation will also be illuminated. Through a focus on these anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns, this thesis will add to understandings of manuscript petitioning culture in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, whilst demonstrating the importance of economic issues to the politics of the early modern public sphere.

Long abstract

This thesis offers a much-needed analysis of anti-monopoly petitioning activity in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Patents of monopoly were a central tool of crown financial policy in this period. Mounting financial problems, combined with pressures for patronage, led Elizabeth and James to turn to this prerogative power as an important means of raising revenues and to reward loyal courtiers and syndicates. Monopolies were increasingly granted over a range of products, affecting almost every industry and type of good. Products such as salt, leather, glass, and vinegar were unable to escape the clutches of patentees. In turn, their granting triggered a torrent of opposition, expressed to authority via numerous means. The expression of anti-monopoly discontent in Elizabethan and Jacobean parliaments has been well-established. In public opinion more broadly, the use of such mechanisms as libels, ballads, and art for the criticism of projectors and monopolists has also been demonstrated. Hitherto, the use of another key means of communication to protest this fiscal device has been largely overlooked: manuscript petitioning.

Petitioning was a crucial form of communication in early modern England and an important form of popular politics. Scholars have begun to appreciate the importance of petitions as a vital means through which a range of subjects expressed their grievances and requests to rulers. No centre of authority, be it local or national, escaped the relentless cry of suitors. However, much scholarship has suffered from a rather narrow chronological focus. The importance of petitioning from the 1640s onwards has been heavily documented by scholars, who have focused on such developments as the rise of print and the outbreak of the Civil War on petitioning activity. At times, this has led to a neglect of the significance of earlier, manuscript petitioning practices. Petitioning emerged as the key means through which discontented subjects protested the relentless stream of monopolies granted by the Crown throughout this period, as they engaged with a central issue in national politics. Through petitions sent to the city, council, parliament, and crown, disgruntled merchants and artisans communicated their discontent to authority, at times forcing real changes in monopoly policy.

This thesis will adopt a case study approach centred on different anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns to demonstrate the importance of this economic issue for engaging the realm's subjects. In doing so, it will offer a much-needed analysis of the practice and culture of manuscript petitioning activity in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period, whilst highlighting the important intersection between economics and politics at the turn of the seventeenth century. It will draw on a range of manuscript documents contained within a variety of archives including those of individual livery companies, the city of London, and the State Papers.

This thesis will explore the role of London's livery and overseas trading companies in this petitioning protest. London's livery companies emerged as strong opponents of monopolies throughout this period, resenting the intrusion of courtier outsiders in their trades and jurisdictions. Yet they also emerged as a concerted source of criticism, possessing as they did their own privileges. Both within and outside of the auspices of company organisation, subjects of many social levels used petitions to protest patents of monopoly. This thesis will therefore add to understandings of the importance of corporations and their active role in political affairs, whilst also highlighting the capacity for subjects to organise independently of the company at the level of the county or according to trading interests. Through a focus on the hidden machinations which saw many of these monopolies granted, the larger interactions between courtier and artisan and city and the court made possible in this extensive era of monopolisation will also be illuminated.

This thesis will adopt a qualitative analysis of petitioning campaigns, paying particular attention to the rhetorical devices and discursive mechanisms used by subjects in their petitions to authority. Challenging assumptions that petitions prior to the 1640s were strictly governed by rules informing their contents, attention will be drawn to the use of sophisticated rhetoric by subjects. Supplications produced were sophisticated appeals designed to negotiate with authorities. Subjects engaged with ideas of faction, conspiracy, the royal prerogative, and debates surrounding corporate regulation to couch their appeals. Within counter-petitions, subjects proved able to draw on concerns with such themes as popularity and sedition to discount the campaigns launched against them. By adopting a case study approach, the impact of contextual circumstances including socio-economic crisis, the Jacobean accession, and economic depression in the 1620s will also be considered.

The introduction will begin by outlining existent historiography in the fields of petitioning, crown finance, and the political activity and culture of London's guilds. It will offer not only a more thorough examination of the definition of monopolies and their use in early modern fiscal policy, but also provide an overview of the petitioning process in this period. This will be essential background for the case studies which follow.

Chapter one will begin in the late Elizabethan period, analysing a campaign against Sir Edward Darcy's patent for the sealing and searching of leather. In this case, petitioning opposition was directed from the London Leathersellers' Company, with the strong support of city authorities. Petitioning was also organised outside of official company structures as the wider leather industry split on their attitudes to Darcy's monopoly. An analysis of this episode casts light not only on the ability for such campaigns to have real and tangible effects, but also highlights the important use of the language of crisis and rebellion by artisans intent on playing on the state's concern with the

many-headed monster in an atmosphere of economic and social troubles. It will also highlight the ways in which issues dominant in the religious politics of this period, pertaining to such issues as the royal prerogative and common law, were used by subjects as bargaining strategies in the economic sphere.

Chapter two will proceed by focusing on an early campaign in James's reign. Despite initial promises to reform their use, James's desperate need for cash saw the monopoly problem deepen, as subjects' hopes for their widespread revocation quickly dissipated. The types of monopoly granted in the Jacobean period also developed, as projectors turned to propose the establishment of new corporations to disguise their monopolistic schemes. These bodies were in turn attacked by older companies. This chapter will offer an analysis of one such campaign, turning to the monopolisation of the production of starch, the incorporation of a new Starchmakers' Company (1607), and petitions issued against this by the London Grocers' Company. Attention will be paid to the strong dialogic element in such petitioning campaigns, focusing especially on the reply issued by the Starchmakers in response, as they attempted to undermine the petitioning activity of their opponents. Both the Grocers and Starchmakers articulated rival truth claims, presenting themselves as the authoritative voice speaking for the commonwealth. By engaging with contemporary distinctions between legitimate and monopolistic corporations, each side attempted to further their own economic agendas. James's accession and the complex politics of London's business world provide the context to this campaign, illuminating our understandings of the divergent interests competing to control the sale and production of this lucrative commodity.

Chapter three will move forward in James's reign, to focus on the monopolisation of glass. This chapter will focus especially on petitioning activity directed to the House of Commons and to a new institution, the Commission for Glass. The Commission marked an important acceptance by authority that anti-monopoly petitions were an inevitable feature of political life, as the Council sought to off-load the burden of dealing with these suits onto commissioners. With the calling of parliament in 1614, 1621, and 1624 aggrieved glassmakers turned to the Commons to direct their complaints to a new, more receptive body of authority. Not only will attention be paid to the ways petitioners shaped their appeals when approaching different authorities, but this case will also offer an example of opposition directed not through an organised London company, but independently through glass artisans and merchants. The case will also offer an insight into the complex politics between courtiers and artisans, exploring a temporary alliance made between the courtier Sir Robert Mansell and a group of London based glassiers seeking incorporation. Through a detailed analysis of petitions produced in this dispute, the ability for subjects to engage with

pertinent discourses in wider court politics of the 1620s, including modes of politic reasoning, will be demonstrated.

Finally, the last chapter of this thesis will focus on a different type of anti-monopoly petitioning campaign, directed against the ancient Merchant Adventurers' Company of London. Attention will be paid to the creation of two important points of contact for petitioning activity: the temporary and permanent Commissions for Trade (1622). Both will be shown to have emerged as important spaces for the sending and hearing of petitions, many of which expressed anti-monopoly sentiments as subjects questioned the effects of the Adventurers' monopoly over the clothing trade. In contrast to a historiography which has focused especially on connections between the gentry in different counties in the early seventeenth century, this chapter will highlight the capacity for subjects below this social level, and in particular clothiers, to organise collective and cross-county petitioning campaigns. In the context of economic depression, authorities took seriously the consideration of such complaints, leading to the creation of new institutions designed to hear economic supplications. This chapter will argue that petitions to this body and its consultation of expert opinion had tangible effects on monopoly policy, contributing to the reduction of this Company's privileges by 1624. It will thus recast this important episode in a new light, emphasising the role of petitions in the context of a particularly severe economic depression.

Overall, this thesis will offer a much-needed analysis of the importance of economic issues to the early modern public sphere and popular politics, whilst enhancing our understandings of Elizabethan and Jacobean petitioning culture. In post-revisionist studies, the importance of economic issues to the public sphere has often been overlooked. Monopolies animated subjects, emerging as a repeated topic of concern in council, court, and parliament. Through petitions, subjects from a variety of social levels protested the effects these grants had on their trades and livelihoods, engaging with prominent ideas in economic thought and with wider developments in political culture to couch their appeals. In shedding light on this important intersection this thesis will demonstrate the centrality of economic issues to the political action of the realm's subjects.

List of Abbreviations

Add.	Additional Manuscript
APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England, New Series</i> , ed. J. R. Dasent (46 vols, London, 1890-1964), vols. 20-39.
BHO	British History Online
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CD 1621	<i>Commons Debates 1621</i> , eds. W. Notestein, F. H. Relf, and H. Simpson (7 vols., New Haven and London, 1935).
CL	The Clothworkers' Company Archive, London
CP	Hatfield House, Cecil Papers.
CPR 30 Eliz	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls 30 Elizabeth I (1587-1588): C 66/1304-1321</i> , ed. S. R. Neal, List and Index Soc., vol. 297 (Kew, 2003).
CPR 34 Eliz	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls 34 Eliz Part I to Part XV (C 66/1379-1394)</i> , Ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 272 (Kew, 1999).
CPR 36 Eliz	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls 36 Elizabeth I (1593-1594): C 66/1405-1424</i> , eds. S. J. Neal and C. Leighton, List and Index Soc., vol. 309 (Kew, 2005).
CPR 40 Eliz	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls 40 Elizabeth I (1597-98): Part 1 (Calendar) C 66/1477-1492</i> , eds. C. Smith, H. Watt, S.R. Neal and C. Leighton, List and Index Soc., vol. 326 (Kew, 2009).
CPR 1&2 Jas	<i>Chancery: Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar and Index 1 & 2 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 97 (Kew, 1974).
CPR 3-5 Jas	<i>Chancery: Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar and Index, 3-5 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 98 (Kew, 1974)
CPR 6 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 6 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 109 (Kew, 1975).
CPR 7 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 7 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 121 (1976).
CPR 9 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 9 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 133 (Kew, 1977).
CPR 10-11 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 10-11 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 134 (Kew, 1977).
CPR 12 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 12 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 157 (Kew, 1979)
CPR 13 Jas	<i>Chancery Patent Rolls (C 66): Calendar, 13 Jas I</i> , ed. List and Index Soc., vol. 164 (Kew, 1980).
GL	Guildhall Library, London
HMC	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports</i>
HMC Hatfield	<i>Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury...</i> (24 vols., London, 1873-1876).
HMC Sackville	<i>Calendar of the manuscripts of Major-General Lord Sackville preserved at Knole, Sevenoaks, Kent. Volume I: Cranfield Papers 1551-1612</i> , ed. A. P. Newton, HMC, 80 (London, 1942)

<i>HMC Smedmore</i>	<i>Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Report on the Additional Estate Papers of the Clavell and Mansel Families of Smedmore 1516-1874</i> , eds. J. P. Ferris and E. Alien (London, 1977).
<i>HoP</i>	<i>The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604-1629</i> , eds. A. Thrush and J. P. Ferris, 6 vols (Cambridge, 2010), www.historyofparliamentonline.org .
Lans.	Lansdowne Manuscript, British Library
Larkin and Hughes	<i>Stuart Royal Proclamations</i> , ed. J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes (2 vols., Oxford, 1973-83).
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PP 1614	<i>Proceedings in Parliament 1614 (House of Commons)</i> , ed. M. Jansson (Philadelphia, 1988).
PP 1624	<i>Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons</i> , ed. P. Baker (2015-2018), <i>British History Online</i> , https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl .
<i>Seventeenth-Century Documents</i>	<i>Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents</i> , ed. J. Thirsk and J. P. Cooper (Oxford, 1972)
SRO	Somerset Record Office
SP	State Papers
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
Unwin, <i>Gilds</i>	G. Unwin, <i>The Gilds and Companies of London</i> , 2dn edn. (London, 1918).
Unwin, <i>Industrial Organisation</i>	G. Unwin, <i>Industrial Organisation in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries</i> (Oxford 1904)
WYA	West Yorkshire Archives

Introduction

Being by me moer p[ar]ticularly Demanded, why they repaired that day vnto the Court, in the end they confessed that their purpos[e] was to haue exhibited a complaint vnto the L[ords]. The copie whereof (being in my opinion very slanderous & scandalous...I herewith send vnto your L[ords]...)¹

On 23 July 1605 Thomas Sackville the earl of Dorset and Lord Treasurer of England wrote to the Privy Council concerning an attempt by subjects to present a petition at James VI and I's English court. According to Dorset, despite the London 'company of the diars' having failed to present their suit, James had still been 'much offended' by their attempts.² Dorset had thus been asked by the Council to consider and examine this petitioning episode to ascertain not only the validity of the petitioners' complaints but also the manner in which they had conducted themselves at court.

The petitioners in this case, members of the Dyers' Company, had intended to supplicate against a patent of monopoly imposed on the product of logwood. This was an imported wood used to produce various coloured dyes, yet its use had been periodically prohibited by the Crown on the grounds that it produced defective colours.³ This had not prevented the product from capturing the attention of courtiers seeking to make quick profits from its use; licences had frequently been issued allowing individuals to import and sell the commodity in exchange for rents to the Crown.⁴ As part of James's attempts to find new means of raising revenues, a grant was issued to the courtier Sir Arthur Aston on 23 August 1604 granting him and his syndicate exclusive rights to import logwood and to produce a new dyeing mixture from it.⁵ In a letter sent to a

¹ 'The Earl of Dorset to the Council', 23 July 1605, CP 109/141, fo. 141r.

² Ibid.

³ For details on logwood, see M. Prestwich, *Cranfield: Politics and Profits Under the Early Stuarts: The Career of Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 67-8; R. H. Tawney, *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 104-5; G. M. Joseph, 'British Loggers and Spanish Governors: the Logwood Trade and its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part I', *Institute of Caribbean Studies*, 14:2 (July, 1974), pp. 15-16; A. P. Newton, *The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493-1688* (London, 1933), pp. 144-5.

⁴ Joseph, 'British Loggers', p. 16; A. M. Wilson, 'The Logwood Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in S. Socolow (ed.), *The Atlantic Staple Trade. Volume II: the Economics of Trade* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 478.

⁵ J. Hübner, 'A Contribution to the History of Dyeing', *Journal of the Society of Chemical Industry*, 32:22 (1913), p. 1049.

confidant shortly before the patent's granting, Lord Chief Justice Popham noted that trials of the commodity had demonstrated that it could be used to produce durable dyes suitable for colouring cloth.⁶ This sudden interest shown by authority to logwood was given greater clarity later in Popham's letter; by allowing its importation James stood to gain from new customs duties paid by the patentees.⁷ Not all subjects would prove willing to embrace these changes. In particular, the passing of the grant triggered immediate opposition by the Dyers' Company, a group whom Popham had rightly guessed would be unhappy with the monopolisation of this troublesome dyeing wood by a haphazard group of inexperienced courtiers.⁸

Dorset's letter to the Council was chiefly concerned with two issues. Not only did he express his anxiety with the 'slanderous & scandalous' contents of the Dyers' complaint, but he proceeded to express concern with the ways through which they had attempted to petition authority.⁹ The Dyers had proven themselves to be importunate suitors of a type disliked by king and council. Not only had they already 'informed the Earle of Nourthampton in private with some part of their greifes', petitioning him verbally, but they had also sent a written supplication to Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury, 'of on[e] & the same effect' for which they had received a 'iust & reasonable aunswer.'¹⁰ As such their tenacity to approach the Council with yet another petition and to 'recomplain & peticion a new' was seen to 'excedingly increase their offenses.'¹¹ Ultimately these Dyers had shown themselves to be burdensome subjects ignoring Salisbury's judgment and wasting the time and attention of the Council. Dorset thus commanded that all those involved be instructed not to trouble king or council with 'any petic[i]ons, vntill michelmas Terme' following.¹² Yet contrary to Dorset's hopes, this was not to be the end of the Dyers' resistance to the logwood

⁶ 'Lord Chief Justice Popham to Lord Berwick', 9 Aug. 1604, CP 106/68, fo. 68r.

⁷ *Ibid.*, fos. 68v-69r.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ CP 109/141, fo. 141r. For the petition, see 'Company of Dyers to the Lords of the Council', 21 July 1605, CP Petitions 2090.

¹⁰ CP 109/141, fo. 141r.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, fo. 141v.

¹² *Ibid.*, fo. 142r.

monopolies; via further petitions, they continued to express their discontent with the monopolisation of logwood throughout James's reign.¹³

This petitioning episode casts light on two crucial and heavily interconnected issues in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England: the rise of patents of monopoly as an integral tool of prerogative finance and the use of petitions by subjects to articulate their discontent to the same. The bestowal of a monopoly over a quite-seemingly random product to a group of inexperienced courtiers was not a one-off peculiarity. In the face of cash-shortages and pressures of patronage, both Elizabeth and James would come to rely on this fiscal device as the royal court became an arena for the machinations of projectors, syndicates, and unscrupulous courtiers. This was not an issue which dominated high political spaces alone. In parliament, within satire and libels, and in the city of London's various guild halls, subjects reacted to the changes wrought by this economic policy. Through petitions they expressed their discontent with grants which infringed on their trades and livelihoods, negotiating with the authorities to mitigate their effects on their lives and trades. The recourse to petitioning by the Dyers was not unique to this company: between 1590-1625 London's companies emerged as particularly staunch opponents of monopolies, petitioning the wider city, council, parliament, and even the Crown to protest this onerous economic policy.¹⁴

The following thesis will offer an exploration of the prevalence, significance, and centrality of anti-monopoly petitioning activity between 1590-1625. Much recent scholarship on early seventeenth-century politics, concerned as it is with debates about the origins of the Civil War, has

¹³ For a grant to Earl of Dunbar on duties on logwood on 9 December 1605, see TNA, SP 14/141, fo. 18r; C66/1679, *CPR 3-5 Jas*, fo. 200r. For new taxes and duties on logwood on 1 July 1607 and 1 July 1608, see TNA, SP 14/141, fos. 30r, 42r; C66/1744, *CPR 3-5 Jas*, fo. 337v. For a proposed patent for logwood, see 'The Council to Sir Henry Lee', 21 Oct. 1608, TNA, SP 14/37, fo. 45r; 'Reasons for the cherishing of the mystery', 21 Oct. 1608, TNA, SP 14/37, fo. 47r; 'Desires and Conditions for a grant to the inventors of a stuff for fixing colours dyed', 21 Oct. 1608, TNA, SP 14/37, fo. 46r. For petitions in response see 'The Company of Dyers in London to the Privy Council', Oct. 1608, CP 196/128; 'Dyers of London to the Earl of Salisbury', Oct. 1608, CP Petitions 2088; BL, Add. MS 10038, fos. 123r-124v, 125, 126r-127v, 128r-129v; *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 404-410.

¹⁴ Joan Thirsk has argued that many court-backed monopolies had their most tangible effects in London, see J. Thirsk, 'Projects for Gentlemen, Jobs for the Poor: Mutual Aid in the Vale of Tewkesbury, 1600-1630', in idem, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London, 1984), p. 286; R. Ashton, 'Conflicts of Concessionary Interest in Early Stuart England', in D. C. Coleman and F. J. Fisher (eds.), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England: Essays Presented to F. J. Fisher* (London, 1976), pp. 113-31.

focused on religious divisions, the relationship of common law and royal prerogative, and the politics of court scandal.¹⁵ In post-revisionist scholarship, economic debates and their impact on the political have fallen out of favour. The works of Robert Ashton and Robert Brenner have focused on the interactions between merchants in London and the Crown in the seventeenth century.¹⁶ However the wider political participation triggered by the economic issue of monopolies, and the larger interaction between subjects and central political authorities occasioned by the same, has been largely overlooked, particularly for the early seventeenth century.

Monopolies were a dominant topic of discussion in such spaces as parliament, council, and the court; they also politicised the realm's subjects at many social levels. It was chiefly through the medium of petitions that subjects of varying social status, from courtiers to humble artisans, responded to the changing economic landscape around them, protesting and negotiating the rise of this contentious fiscal policy. Within their complaints subjects used their concerns with economic ideas to engage with matters of high policy: they addressed such issues as factionalism and the role of the prerogative, whilst simultaneously engaging with emerging debates within economic thought. Through their suits subjects were sometimes successful in securing the relief they so desperately craved against individuals and groups ostensibly more wealthy, powerful, and well-connected. By November 1605 for example, Aston's grant was re-issued on the basis that the charges he had imposed on logwood were too high. The subsequent monopoly he was granted was thus directly influenced by the complaints of the Dyers' Company.¹⁷

¹⁵ J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (2nd edn; Oxford, 2014); N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1990); A. Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹⁶ Both have different interpretations as to the point at which these relations became strained. See Ashton for ideas of a crisis of relationship between city and crown and new alliances made between company and parliament by 1629, see R. Ashton, *The City and the Court, 1604-1643* (Cambridge, 1979), chs. 3-4. Brenner argues that this breakdown occurred much later, see R. Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London and New York, 2003), ch. 1.

¹⁷ C66/1677, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 197r.

This thesis will adopt a case study approach centred on different anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns to demonstrate the importance of this national issue for engaging the realm's subjects. It will also offer an analysis of the practice and culture of manuscript petitioning activity in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. As noted, London's livery companies emerged as particularly prominent petitioners against grants which they perceived as threatening to their established jurisdictions. Not only were they key agitators against monopolies, but they too emerged as the source of concerted attacks and anti-monopoly criticism in our period. After all, whilst they may have protested the granting of new patents, these bodies held their own exclusive rights and privileges. This thesis will focus heavily on supplications presented by and against some of these companies, contributing to our knowledge and understanding of the activism and strong political presence of corporations in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹⁸ The often-untapped richness of these companies' various manuscript archives offers important insights into anti-monopoly petitioning activity and the processes through which disgruntled subjects organised to petition authority. By drawing on case studies from across this period, a consideration of the impact of wider contextual changes on petitioning activity will also be offered, including socio-economic crisis in the 1590s, the Jacobean accession, and a wider economic depression in the 1620s.

The existence of a vibrant world of popular politics and public opinion in early modern England has been an important finding of post-revisionism. Previously held assumptions that subjects were unaware and uninterested in events occurring outside of the immediate confines of their localities

¹⁸ I. Archer, 'The London Lobbies in the Later Sixteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 31:1 (1988), pp. 17-44; D. Dean, 'Pressure Groups and Lobbies in the Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Parliaments', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 11:2 (Dec., 1991), pp. 139-52; D. M. Dean, 'Public or Private? London, Leather and Legislation in Elizabethan England', *Historical Journal*, 31:3 (1988), pp. 525-48; C. R. Kyle, 'Parliament and the Politics of Carting in Early Stuart London', *London Journal*, 27:2 (2002), pp. 1-11.

have been replaced by studies on two main areas, the politics of news and 'public opinion' and studies of popular politics and participation.¹⁹ Starting with the pioneering work of Richard Cust, historians have increasingly recognised the large degree of news available to subjects across the realm in oral, manuscript, and written forms.²⁰ Via devices such as libels, pamphlets, and ballads, subjects of all social degrees were frequently exposed to news.²¹ In the face of such widespread interaction with national political affairs, authority could not afford to be blind to the perceptions and views of its subjects. Habermasian notions of the emergence of a critical 'public sphere' in the late seventeenth century have been applied to the early modern period to understand many of these developments. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus have thus argued for the existence of an episodic, post-Reformation public sphere which required officials to make numerous 'pitches' to capture public opinion via manuscript and printed materials.²² Noah Millstone's pioneering study of manuscript news pamphlets in early Stuart England demonstrates the size and social depth of audience for these materials, and the impact that their circulation had on the politics of the later

¹⁹ For older views, see D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 106-7 who argued for the existence of a 'conservative localism' amongst humble subjects in the localities. D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 14 for assumptions that subjects were indifferent to larger political issues prior to the Civil War years. For political engagement see T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001); J. Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 1-22; I. Archer, 'Popular Politics in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in P. Griffiths and M. S. R. Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 26-46.

²⁰ R. Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 112:1 (1986), pp. 60-90; A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 36-43; I. Atherton, 'The itch grown a disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', *Prose Studies*, 21:2 (1998), pp. 39-65.

²¹ A. Bellany, "'Raylinge Rymes and Vaunting Verse'": Libellous Politics in Early Stuart England, 1603-1628', in K. Sharpe and P. Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 285-310; P. Croft, 'Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England', *Historical Research*, 68:167 (1995), pp. 266-85; N. Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2016).

²² P. Lake and S. Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 45:2 (Apr., 2006), pp. 270-92.

Jacobean and Caroline regimes.²³ Within this context, even courtiers made appeals to public opinion in an effort to court 'popularity.'²⁴

The various means through which subjects could actively participate in the political process have also been increasingly recognised. Whilst previous studies of popular political activity prior to the Civil War were focused on crowd action, riots, and rebellions as a key means through which subjects exercised agency, more recent works have stressed the importance of looking to everyday forms of participation and negotiation available to the 'powerless' in society.²⁵ Social science works such as James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* have drawn attention to the range of political practices used by subordinate subjects in societies, actions which have so often been overlooked in comparison to public acts of defiance.²⁶ Applying such concepts to the early modern period, historians including John Walter have demonstrated that actions such as grumbling were important 'weapons of the weak' used by subordinates to negotiate with elites.²⁷ The work of Mark Goldie has also drawn attention to the importance of more formal and institutional means of participation. Via office-holding, many male subjects were actively involved in early modern governance; by 1700 as many as one half of adult males may have governed in any one decade.²⁸ As members of the Church of England, men and women were also regularly exposed to news via sermons at the pulpit and actively participated in politics through involvement in prayer, fasting,

²³ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, chs. 3, 5, 7.

²⁴ T. Cogswell, 'The People's Love: the Duke of Buckingham and Popularity', in T. Cogswell, R. Cust and P. Lake (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 211-34; A. Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 5.

²⁵ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 8-9; M. J. Braddick and J. Walter, 'Introduction. Grids of Power: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Early Modern Society', in idem (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 5-8.

²⁶ J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale, 1990), pp. 198-200.

²⁷ J. Walter, 'Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England', in M. J. Braddick and J. Walter (eds.), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 123-5. Also see D. Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford, 2010).

²⁸ M. Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England', in Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded*, pp. 153-94; V. Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', *London Journal*, 5:1 (1979), pp. 3-34.

and special worship.²⁹ Through means as diverse as the singing of ballads and even the ringing of bells and lighting of bonfires, subjects were able to engage with crucial political issues.³⁰

As part of these larger trends in scholarship, petitioning has increasingly been recognised as one such medium used by subjects to make requests and articulate grievances to local and national authorities.³¹ Petitioning was an ancient mode of communication existent throughout much of Europe and had been an important activity since medieval times, although the quantity of petitioning activity appears to have become far more extensive in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³² In early modern England, no centre of authority escaped the relentless cry of suitors, as subjects petitioned courts, the Council, parliament, and even the Crown directly.³³ Yet whilst scholars have certainly begun to appreciate the prevalence of petitioning, much existent work has suffered from a rather narrow chronological focus. Particular attention has been paid to petitioning both during and after the Civil War years, focusing for example on the numbers of female petitioners seeking relief from parliament and crown in the context of domestic turmoil.³⁴ The role

²⁹ N. Mears, 'Public Worship and Political Participation in Elizabethan England', *Journal of British Studies*, 51:1 (Jan., 2012), pp. 4-25.

³⁰ D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989).

³¹ Lake and Pincus, 'Public Sphere', pp. 273-9.

³² W. M. Ormrod, 'Introduction: Medieval Petitions in Context', in W. M. Ormrod, G. Dodd, and A. Musson (eds.), *Medieval Petitions: Grace and Grievance* (York, 2009), pp. 1-11; H. Lacey, 'Petitioners for Royal Pardon in Fourteenth-Century England', in H. Killick and T. Smith (eds.), *Petitions and Strategies of Persuasion in the Middle Ages: The English Crown and the Church, c. 1200-c.1550* (York, 2018), pp. 40-63; K. Bowie and T. Munck, 'Early Modern Political Petitioning and Public Engagement in Scotland, Britain and Scandinavia, c. 1550-1795', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 38:3 (2018), pp. 271-8; B. Kümin and A. Würzler, 'Petitions, *Gravamina* and the Early Modern State: Local Influence on Central Legislation in England and Germany (Hesse)', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 17:1 (1997), pp. 39-60; B. Waddell, J. Peacey, and S. Howard (eds.), *The Power of Petitioning in Seventeenth-Century England*, <https://petitioning.history.ac.uk> (29 June 2022).

³³ For petitions to parliament, see J. R. Hart, *Justice Upon Petition: the House of Lords and the Reformation of Justice 1621-1675* (London, 1991); Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, ch. 8. For petitions to the Council, see J. P. Dawson, 'The Privy Council and Private Law in the Tudor and Stuart periods: II', *Michigan Law Review*, 48:5 (1950), pp. 627-56. For petitions to the Crown, see R. Hoyle, D. Tankard and S. Neal (eds.), *Heard Before the King: Registers of Petitions to James I, 1603-16*, List and Index Soc. (2 vols., Kew, 2006); B. Weiser, 'Access and Petitioning during the Reign of Charles II', in E. Cruickshanks (ed.), *The Stuart Courts* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 203-14.

³⁴ H. Worthen, 'Suplicants and Guardians: the Petitions of Royalist Widows during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660', *Women's History Review*, 26:4 (2017), pp. 528-40; I. Peck, 'The Great Unknown: the Negotiation and Narration of Death by English War Widows, 1647-60', *Northern History*, 53:2 (2016), pp. 220-35; A. M. McEntee, "'The [un] civill-sisterhood of oranges and lemons": Female Petitioners and Demonstrators, 1642-53', *Prose Studies*, 14:3 (1991), pp. 92-111; E. Vallance, 'A Democratic Culture?

of county petitions in the lead up to the conflict, as well as petitioning practices during the period of the English Republic, have been extensively studied.³⁵

In part, the focus on petitioning activity in these years can be explained by an important technological development that changed the nature and scope of supplications: print. The rise of the printed petition has meant that the proliferation of petitions and broadsides in the 1640s and 1650s, along with accompanying mass subscription campaigns, has been a dominant focus in historiography.³⁶ David Zaret has argued for the importance of printed petitions for the development of a public sphere in 1640s England.³⁷ Zaret has argued that these were used as a tool to manipulate public opinion, allowing swathes of hitherto alienated subjects to engage in national debates.³⁸ He also argues for the importance of print for helping to foster a new 'dialogic' element in the petitioning process as groups used supplications and countersuits to challenge each other.³⁹ This focus on the importance of the printed petition has led Zaret to underestimate the significance of manuscript petitioning prior to these developments. He has argued that petitions in the early seventeenth century were strictly governed by rules dictating their contents, focused primarily on local grievances as opposed to national concerns, and thus void of real criticisms of authority.⁴⁰

Women, Citizenship and Subscriptional Texts in Early Modern England', in C. Cuttica and M. Peltonen (eds.), *Democracy and Anti-Democracy in Early Modern England, 1603-1689* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 260-78. For later periods, see M. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford and New York, 2005), ch. 3; B. Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life, 1660-1720* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 126-38; P. Loft, 'Involving the Public: Parliament, Petitioning, and the Language of Interest, 1688-1720', *Journal of British Studies*, 55:1 (Jan., 2016), pp. 1-23.

³⁵ Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion*, pp. 139-41, 228-32; A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1985), ch. 6; A. Fletcher, 'Petitioning and the Outbreak of the Civil War in Derbyshire', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, XCIII (1973), pp. 33-44; P. Lake, 'Puritans, Popularity and Petitions: Local Politics in National Context, Cheshire 1641', in T. Cogswell, R. Cust, and P. Lake (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 259-89; D. Hirst, 'Making Contact: Petitions and the English Republic', *Journal of British Studies*, 45:1 (Jan., 2006), pp. 26-50.

³⁶ J. Peacey, 'Parliament, Printed Petitions and the Political Imaginary in Seventeenth-Century England', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 38:3 (2018), pp. 350-63; C. R. Kyle, *Theater of State: Parliament and Political Culture in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, 2012), ch. 6; D. Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, 2000).

³⁷ Zaret, *Origins*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-20, 240.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

Zaret's dismissal of manuscript petitioning practices is reflective of another weakness in scholarship: a tendency to favour the analysis of printed petitions at the expense of the torrent of surviving manuscript documents scattered throughout various archives.

Works by Richard Hoyle, Laura Flannigan, and Tim Stretton have by contrast highlighted the importance of petitioning in the sixteenth century to such bodies as the Court of Requests, the King's Master of Requests, and the Crown.⁴¹ Jason Peacey, Brodie Waddell, and Sharon Howard have also drawn scholars' attentions to the sheer extent of surviving petitioning material across the seventeenth century in their important 'Power of Petitioning' project, offering transcriptions of numerous local and national petitions.⁴² Despite such important works, the years immediately preceding the growth of the printed petition have still often been overlooked, and the full power, range, and significance of petitioning in the early seventeenth century underappreciated. Far from dealing only with local grievances as Zaret suggests, petitioning at this time was a crucial means through which subjects engaged with a prominent issue in national politics: monopolies.

Between 1590-1625 the highly charged issue of patents of monopoly triggered a torrent of petitions which saw subjects respond to, and engage with, this key aspect of crown financial policy. At their most basic definition monopolies were grants bestowed via the royal prerogative powers of the Crown, and broadly speaking, took four main forms. Patents could be issued over new inventions giving their holder the sole rights to produce and use their product or newly found technologies. Patents could also allow holders to supervise certain trades such as the alehouse industry. *Non obstante* grants provided dispensations from the law, often as licences allowing the import or export of prohibited goods. The final type of patent was perhaps the most unpopular,

⁴¹ R. Hoyle, 'Petitioning as Popular Politics in Early Sixteenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, 75:190 (Nov., 2002), pp. 365-89; R. Hoyle, 'The Masters of Requests and the Small Change of Jacobean Patronage', *English Historical Review*, 126:520 (2011), pp. 544-81; L. Flannigan, 'Litigants in the English 'Court of Poor Men's Causes', or Court of Requests, 1512-25', *Law and History Review*, 38:2 (2020), pp. 303-37; T. Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁴² Waddell, Peacey, and Howard (eds.), *The Power of Petitioning in Seventeenth-Century England*.

granting holders the sole rights to produce, sell, or exercise certain commodities and trades.⁴³ Often these were issued on the basis that the holder had discovered new techniques or processes for the making of specific commodities.⁴⁴

The accompanying authority given to patentees only served to heighten their unpopularity; holders were giving vast powers of licencing, searching, and punishment, whilst subjects found themselves barred from practising their accustomed trades or forced to pay for licences to continue to do so.⁴⁵ Such patents caused the prices of affected commodities to increase whilst their quality declined.⁴⁶

The power to grant monopolies was understood as an important aspect of the monarch's prerogative powers. Under the guidance of William Cecil, the granting of monopolies emerged as an important form of economic policy designed to encourage the establishment of new domestic industries, increase employment opportunities, and reduce England's dependence on imports.⁴⁷ Patents were thus commonly bestowed on foreigners or inventors who promised to introduce new skills in the realm. However, a descent into what Joan Thirsk termed a 'scandalous' phase in their granting from the 1580s saw monopolies increasingly granted to courtiers as tools of patronage.⁴⁸ The cash-strapped Crown saw the benefits of bestowing these grants on suitors and courtiers in lieu of official salaries or to reward loyal service.⁴⁹

⁴³ H. G. Fox, *Monopolies and Patents: A Study of the History and Future of the Patent Monopoly* (Toronto, 1947), pp. 62-5.

⁴⁴ J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 53-6.

⁴⁵ Fox, *Monopolies and Patents*, p. 64.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ F. Heal and C. Holmes, 'The Economic Patronage of William Cecil', in P. Croft (eds.), *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 199-231.

⁴⁸ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, pt. 1, ch. 4; W. H. Price, *The English Patents of Monopoly* (London, 1906), pp. 16-17. Monopolies did start to become contentious in the 1570s, see D. H. Sacks, 'The Counterweaving of Benefits: Monopoly, Liberty, and Benevolence in Elizabethan England', in D. Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 274.

⁴⁹ J. Guy, 'The 1590s: the Second Reign of Elizabeth I?' in *idem* (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 5-6; S. Adams, 'The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: the 1590s in Perspective', in Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, pp. 39-40.

Economic and legal historians have noted the frequent use of monopolies by both Elizabeth and James.⁵⁰ Scholars such as Thirsk, Linda Levy Peck, and John Cramsie have stressed the centrality of monopolies as a feature of crown financial and patronage policy heavily utilised by both monarchs.⁵¹ Whilst Christopher Dent previously suggested that there was little evidence for the existence of any 'anti-monopolist public opinion' in the early modern period, the tensions triggered by their use have been recognised as a key and 'recurring' aspect of economic and political culture from Elizabeth's reign well into the Stuart period.⁵² The expression of passionate anti-monopoly sentiments within contemporary parliaments has received perhaps the most attention; debates in Elizabeth's final parliament in 1601 and James's parliaments of 1621 and 1624 have received extensive attention by historians, debating whether or not hostility to monopolies represented genuine opposition to the Crown.⁵³ Outside of the Commons, instances of active resistance to monopoly grants have been illuminated using both Privy Council and Star Chamber records.⁵⁴ More recently, scholars have even traced the articulation of anti-projector sentiments in popular culture

⁵⁰ A. A. Gomme, *Patents of Invention: Origin and Growth of the Patent System in Britain* (London, 1946); E. F. Churchill, 'Monopolies', *Law Quarterly Review*, 41:3 (1925), pp. 275-96; E. W. Hulme, 'History of the Patent System Under the Prerogative and at Common Law', *Law Quarterly Review*, 12:2 (1896), pp. 141-54; E. W. Hulme, 'History of the Patent System Under the Prerogative and at Common Law: a Sequel', *Law Quarterly Review*, 16:1 (1900), pp. 44-56.

⁵¹ Thirsk, *Economic Policy; Price, Patents*; J. Cramsie, *Kingship and Crown Finance under James VI and I, 1603-1625* (Suffolk, 2002), pp. 8-9, chs. 1-3, 5-6; L. L. Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London, 1982), pp. 67-77; L. L. Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London, 1990), ch. 6.

⁵² C. Dent, "'Generally inconvenient": the 1624 *Statute of Monopolies* as Political Compromise', *Melbourne University Law Review*, 33:2 (2009), p. 434. Also see W. R. Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1910), I, p. 118 for the notion that opposition was 'irrelevant'. R. Ashton, 'Charles I and the City', in F. J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England in Honour of R. H. Tawney* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 147.

⁵³ Fox, *Monopolies*, pp. 75-77, 103-25; J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London, 1957), pt. 5-6; Price, *Patents*, pp. 20-2; Sacks, 'The Countervailing of Benefits', pp. 272-92; D. H. Sacks, 'Parliament, Liberty and the Commonweal', in J. H. Hexter (ed.), *Parliament and Liberty from the Reign of Elizabeth to the English Civil War* (Stanford, 1992), pp. 85-121; D. M. Dean, *Law-making and Society in Late Elizabethan England: the Parliament of England, 1584-1601* (Cambridge, 1996), ch. 3; R. Zaller, *The Parliament of 1621: A Study in Constitutional Conflict* (Berkeley, 1971); C. Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford, 1979), ch. 2.

⁵⁴ D. Seaborne Davies, 'Further Light on the Case of Monopolies', *Law Quarterly Review*, 48:3 (1932), pp. 400-3, 411-14; G. D. Duncan, 'Monopolies under Elizabeth I, 1558-1585' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1976).

more broadly, expressed within libels, ballads, art, and satire.⁵⁵ Legal suits brought against patentees and common law objections have also been considered.⁵⁶

The use of petitions to protest monopolies has received far less attention.⁵⁷ Both Ian Archer and Nicholas Tyacke have demonstrated the use of petitions by London's companies to express discontent with monopoly patents in the 1590s, whilst Chris Kyle has analysed broadside petitions protesting monopolies sent to parliament in both 1621 and 1624.⁵⁸ Tyacke has even claimed that the protest triggered by their use offers a strong example of the public sphere in action.⁵⁹ Despite this awareness, there has still as yet been no sole, concentrated study on the multitude of anti-monopoly petitions produced between 1590-1625. This thesis will address this clear lacuna in scholarship, arguing for the importance of manuscript supplications as the main device through which disaffected subjects reacted to this controversial financial policy. In doing so, it will also add to understandings of petitioning culture in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, demonstrating the centrality of this mode of communication even before the rise of mass subscription campaigns.

⁵⁵ A. Bellany and A. McRae (eds.), *Early Stuart Libels* <http://www.earlystuartlibels.net/htdocs/index.html> [17 Nov. 2021]; A. Bellany and T. Cogswell, *The Murder of King James I* (New Haven, 2006); H. Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures: Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2009); E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England. Volume III: the Age of Mercantilism*, 6th edn (3 vols, London, 1956), iii, pp. 356-7; N. Tyacke, 'Introduction: Locating the "English Revolution"', in idem (ed.), *The English Revolution c. 1590-1720: Politics, Religion and Communities* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 14-16; H. Levy, *Monopoly and Competition: A Study in English Industrial Organisation* (transl; Ontario, 2001), ch. 3.

⁵⁶ J. H. Baker, *The Reinvention of Magna Carta 1216-1616* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 311-23. For evolving common law ideas pertaining to property rights and the use of such ideas to oppose monopolies, see C. Holmes, 'Parliament, Liberty, Taxation, and Property', in Hexter (ed.), *Parliament and Liberty*, pp. 122-54; C. W. Brooks, 'Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in J. Barry and C. W. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 125.

⁵⁷ For petitions to parliament see E. R. Foster, 'The Procedure of the House of Commons Against Patents and Monopolies, 1621-1624', in W. A. Aiken and B. D. Henning (eds.), *Conflict in Stuart England: Essays in Honour of Wallace Notestein* (London, 1960), pp. 57-86; Kyle, *Theater*, pp. 141-44, 165-70. For petitions for monopolies see Hoyle, *Heard Before the King*, pp. xxi-xxii.

⁵⁸ Archer, 'London Lobbies', pp. 29-34; N. Tyacke, 'Collective Biography and the Interpretative Challenge of Early Stuart Parliamentary History', *Parliamentary History*, 32:3 (2013), p. 547.

⁵⁹ Tyacke, 'Collective Biography', p. 547.

As recent scholarship has so aptly demonstrated, petitioning was ubiquitous in early modern society. Through supplications all types of subjects could express grievances and requests to different centres of authority. Different genres of petition were existent, including letters of petition, petitions to local authorities or the Crown, legal petitions, parliamentary petitions, and more public petitioning documents. James Daybell has argued for the importance of petitionary letters in the Tudor period, used by elite women to petition on behalf of themselves, their kin, or clients.⁶⁰ Often these drew on epistolary conventions and were sent to the monarch or to prominent courtiers.⁶¹ Petitions to law courts were another important genre of supplication. Both Stretton and Flannigan have examined petitions sent to the Court of Requests, examining not only the types of subjects who approached this body but also the various rhetorical strategies used by petitioners.⁶² Subjects could also send petitions to local authorities, including to Justices at Quarter or Assize sessions. These dealt with a range of issues, from expressing complaints about the presence of particularly unruly alehouses in a parish to making requests for poor relief.⁶³ Both Steve Hindle and Jonathan Healey have examined the prevalence of petitions for poor relief in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, illuminating the various ‘survival strategies’ employed by the realm’s poorest subjects.⁶⁴ Whilst we have little knowledge of the precise means through which these were presented, it is thought that individuals likely proffered these suits in person.⁶⁵

Subjects residing in cities and towns could also send their petitions to other local authorities. In London, the Court of Aldermen became a particularly important space for the presentation of supplications pertaining to such issues as apprenticeship, the city freedom, and

⁶⁰ J. Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁶² Flannigan, ‘Litigants’; Stretton, *Waging Law*.

⁶³ H. Falvey, ‘“Scandalus to us all”: Presenting an Anti-Alehouse Petition from Late Elizabethan Rickmansworth (Hertfordshire)’, *Rural History*, 31:1 (2020), pp. 1-15; Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*.

⁶⁴ S. Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 8, 405-24; J. Healey, *The First Century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), ch. 3.

⁶⁵ Healey, *Century of Welfare*, p. 92.

other economic matters.⁶⁶ Petitions were sometimes forwarded from local authorities to the Privy Council, allowing subjects a means to communicate with this central body through the assistance of local officials as intermediaries. During times of hardship, JPs often forwarded petitions they had received to the Council, especially when concerned with the potential outbreak of disorder. The Court of Aldermen also acted as intermediaries for petitioners. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, institutions such as this played an important role in mediating petitions throughout our period.

Petitions could also be sent by subjects directly to central authorities. Parliamentary petitions were an important genre of supplication, dealing with a torrent of issues including religion, the law, and the economy.⁶⁷ They could be sent collectively in the name of whole counties or towns and were frequently sent by London's livery companies as part of their extensive lobbying efforts. As will be demonstrated, institutional changes including the development of standing committees and a general decline in the importance of bills led to a growth of parliamentary petitioning activity in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁸ Parliament itself even used petitions framed in terms of the national interest to express grievances to James and Charles, especially to deal with such sensitive issues as the prerogative. The important 'Petition of Right' of 1628 written against Charles's Forced Loan and other undue extensions of the prerogative evolved from this culture of parliamentary petitioning complaint.⁶⁹ Petitions sent to the Commons against monopolies will be our source of focus in the third chapter of this thesis as we explore the impact of these broader institutional developments on anti-monopoly petitioning practice.

⁶⁶ Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 128; J. P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, 1997), ch. 4.

⁶⁷ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, ch. 8.

⁶⁸ A. Thrush, 'Legislation and Petitions', *HoP*, i, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/xi-legislation-and-petitions> (27 July 2021); Foster, 'Procedure'; Kyle, *Theater*, ch. 6. For later struggles to establish a concrete right to petition parliament see M. Knights, "'The Lowest Degree of Freedom": the Right to Petition Parliament, 1640-1800', *Parliamentary History*, 37:1 (2018), pp. 18-34.

⁶⁹ E. R. Foster, 'Petitions and the Petition of Right', *Journal of British Studies*, 14:1 (Nov., 1974), pp. 21-45.

Petitions were also sent to the Privy Council, individual councillors, and the monarch.⁷⁰ Supplications were frequently presented to the monarch whilst he or she processed to chapel or travelled the realm on royal progress. In 1605-1606 the Grocers' Company recorded payments for the hiring of three horses to follow James to Oxford and Stoke-on-Trent for the 'p[ro]curing and effecting of the Companies newe charter.'⁷¹ The receiving of petitions was seen as an important element of kingship; not only did the monarch's public consideration of suits provide an opportunity to demonstrate paternalism to their subjects, but it also allowed those same subjects an important means through which to express their grievances.⁷² Both Elizabeth and James have been regarded as receptive to petitioners; James stressed the need to be seen as a 'poore mans king', accepting and hearing the cries of his subjects.⁷³ James's open style of kingship and reliance on counsel made him particularly receptive to suits, something which was not lost on contemporaries.⁷⁴ His Master of Requests, Sir Roger Wilbraham, thus described the new king as 'most bountifull, seldome denying any sute', whilst his predecessor had been 'strict in geving.'⁷⁵ Petitions directed to the monarch were vetted and their presentation organised by the Master of Requests.⁷⁶ This was a popular route for the sending of petitions with Hoyle estimating that James's Masters received around 700-800 petitions per year between 1603-1616.⁷⁷ A surviving register of petitions left by Wilbraham has shown the wide range of petitions sent to authority in this way, dealing with issues such as enclosure, private disputes, and even requests for monopolies.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Dawson, 'Privy Council.'

⁷¹ London, GL, Grocers' Company Wardens' Accounts 1601-1611, MS 11571/9, fo. 34r.

⁷² Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', pp. 545-6; J. Richards, "'His Nowe Majestie'" and the English Monarchy: the Kingship of Charles I before 1640', *Past and Present*, 113:1 (Nov., 1986), p. 80; Weiser, 'Access and Petitioning'; D. Cressy, *Charles I and the People of England* (Oxford, 2015), p. 177.

⁷³ Richards, "'His Nowe Majestie'", p. 80; Hoyle, *Heard Before the King*, p. xiv.

⁷⁴ Cramsie, *Kingship*, p. 50.

⁷⁵ H. S. Scott (ed.), 'The journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham, Solicitor-General in Ireland and Master of Requests for the years 1593-1616, together with notes in another hand for the years 1642-1649', *Camden Miscellany X* (Camden Soc., third series, 1902), p. 59.

⁷⁶ Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', pp. 555-7; Dawson, 'The Privy Council', pp. 630-2. Such was the volume of suitors that there were proposed reforms under Elizabeth for the Masters to have an office outside of Court, see TNA, SP 12/247, fo. 99r.

⁷⁷ Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', p. 552.

⁷⁸ Hoyle, *Heard Before the King*.

Despite this acceptance of petitioning, there were limits and restrictions imposed on petitioning practice. James harshly rebuked a group of tenants near Carlisle in 1617 for their incessant efforts to petition against a local landlord.⁷⁹ The presence of crowds, or indeed the incessant complaints from subjects who, much like the Dyers, refused to take no for an answer, were clearly sources of concern for crown and council alike.

Central authorities were less accessible to petitioners than bodies such as the Quarter Sessions. Access and contacts were crucial for ensuring a suit was heard and lobbying was an important part of the petitioning process.⁸⁰ Thus in many instances petitions written by London's companies against monopolies had vital backing from city authorities including the lord mayor and aldermen. This allowed their complaints to be sent straight to the Privy Council, or to be successfully placed on the parliamentary agenda by drawing on their available funds, an option not available for the poorest individual suitor.

A final genre of petition became especially important in the Tudor and Stuart period: complaint literature. Commonwealth writers produced a torrent of such literature in the mid-Tudor period, addressing the realm's various socio-economic problems.⁸¹ David Coast has drawn attention to the number of texts which used the language of petition to articulate demands and grievances to authority whilst simultaneously appealing to a larger public opinion.⁸² Some of these texts could even blur the boundaries between legitimate petition and manuscript libel, drawing on the language of crude verse and receiving mass circulation.⁸³ On James's accession and in the politically charged context of the 1620s such documents spread widely in printed and manuscript

⁷⁹ R. T. Spence, 'A Royal Progress in the North: James I at Carlisle Castle and the Feast of Brougham, August 1617', *Northern History*, 27:1 (1991), pp. 85-9.

⁸⁰ F. Dabhoiwala, 'Writing Petitions in Early Modern England', in M. J. Braddick and J. Innes (eds.), *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550-1850: Narratives and Representations: a Collection to Honour Paul Slack* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 138-40; Cressy, *Charles I*, pp. 182-4

⁸¹ See for example E. Lamond (ed.), *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England* (Cambridge, 1893).

⁸² See D. Coast, 'Speaking for the People in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 244:1 (2019), pp. 51-88.

⁸³ G. Heaton, "'The Poor Man's Petition': Anthony Atkinson and the Politics of Libel', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 69:1 (2006), pp. 105-20.

form.⁸⁴ Whilst certainly different from the petitions sent by subjects to local authorities, such documents still deserve recognition as an important form of petition, albeit one which attempted to capture public opinion rather than articulate grievances to specific authorities. In many ways these may be seen as antecedents to the later mass petitioning campaigns and subscriptions of the Civil War and Restoration periods.⁸⁵

The construction of petitions was often a collaborative process involving subjects working with scribes, clerks, professional scriveners, or lawyers. Scriveners were important individuals found in numerous communities and helped to produce formal documents including wills, inventories, and supplications.⁸⁶ Millstone has argued that the growth in credit, litigation, and an 'archival state' necessitated the increased presence of scriveners in early modern society.⁸⁷ They were especially numerous in London and vital for the writing of petitions. At other times, subjects could turn to the help and advice of literate members of a community to put pen to paper and write petitions.⁸⁸ Not all subjects needed this assistance. The expansion of commerce in the early modern period, triggering as it did an increase in written bonds and transactions, meant that many craftsmen and traders had acquired some level of literacy, and overall literacy rates are thought to have been higher in this period than previously assumed.⁸⁹ Indeed, many of our petitioners who protested against monopoly grants were merchants or artisans and some may have been literate enough to write their petitions without the help of scribes.

⁸⁴ Coast, 'Speaking for the People', pp. 55, 61.

⁸⁵ For later petitions and addresses see Knights, *Representation*, ch. 3; Vallance, 'A Democratic Culture?', pp. 260-78.

⁸⁶ For a detailed microstudy of one such scrivener working during an outbreak of plague in Newcastle in 1636, see K. Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer: a Scrivener, His City and the Plague* (New Haven, 2011), esp. chs. 5-6. See Dabhoiwala, 'Writing Petitions', pp. 127-48 for the study of the work of one scrivener, William Griffith, under Charles II.

⁸⁷ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, ch. 1.

⁸⁸ M. Spufford, 'The Scribes of Villagers' Wills in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and their Influence', *Local Population Studies*, 7 (1971), pp. 36-8, 41; Dabhoiwala, 'Writing Petitions', pp. 127-8; Cressy, *Literacy*, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁹ Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer*, pp. 66-7. For literacy rates see J. Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective', in T. Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 75-9; Fox, *Oral and Literate*, pp. 17-18; W. Ford, 'The Problem of Literacy in Early Modern England', *History*, 78:252 (Feb., 1993), pp. 22-37.

Legal and social historians have battled with the question of the usefulness and reliability of documents including depositions and petitions for providing insight into the lives of past subjects, especially when written by lawyers. Whilst some have challenged the ability for such documents to provide an authentic insight into the voices of the people, other historians have argued for the utility of using these sources with a view to analysing *how* narratives were shaped by subjects.⁹⁰ As highlighted in Natalie Davis's work on the construction of pardon tales in sixteenth-century France, subjects could actively shape the narratives of their petitions as part of larger 'collaborative efforts' involving subject and scribe.⁹¹ The voice of the petitioner was often the primary one in such enterprises.⁹² Even testators dying of the plague in Newcastle in 1636 were able to ensure that their personal religious sensibilities entered into the wills written down for them by scribes.⁹³

Elements in petitions which may have been fictitious are also worthy of investigation, providing an insight into the negotiation strategies employed by subjects when communicating with authority. Stretton has argued for the need to consider the wider collaborations between subject, scribe, and lawyer which led to the production of legal documents.⁹⁴ Similarly, our manuscript petitions need to be regarded as sources which, whilst certainly part of larger collaborative processes, nevertheless still provide an important insight into subjects' reactions to the changing economic landscape around them. We should not dismiss this whole body of sources on account of the involvement of lawyers and scribes. After all, scribes were hired to articulate the interests of their clients. Many of our petitioning campaigns involved humble company members, their leaders, legal counsel, and at times the city of London. They can be categorised as including a

⁹⁰ See C. Beattie, 'I Your Oratrice: Women's Petitions to the Late Medieval Court of Chancery', in B. Kane and F. Williamson (eds.), *Women, Agency, and the Law, 1300-1700* (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 17-29; Stretton, *Waging Law*, p. 19; Lacey, 'Petitioners for Royal Pardon', pp. 46-8.

⁹¹ N. Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987), p. 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹³ Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer*, pp. 84, 159.

⁹⁴ T. Stretton, 'Women, Legal Records, and the Problem of the Lawyer's Hand', *Journal of British Studies*, 58:4 (Oct., 2019), p. 698.

greater or lesser degree of scribal and legal influence depending on their unique circumstances. Often following a supplication through the process of its production in company court books allows us to reconstruct this in some detail. Throughout the thesis, attention will thus be paid to the degree to which lawyerly and scribal input may have shaped petitioning complaints, whilst also arguing for the need to acknowledge the agency of the subject when crafting and shaping these negotiations with authority.

The opportunities for illiterate subjects to engage in the petitioning process were also wide. Methods of teaching meant that many learned to read before they could write; the presence of marks on supplications reveals that even subjects who could not write read and signed petitions.⁹⁵ Adam Fox has highlighted the enduring importance of oral forms of communication in early modern society and the constant interaction of oral and written cultures.⁹⁶ Petitions fed into this world; they could be verbally constructed in public spaces including churches and alehouses and news of petitioning campaigns could spread via word of mouth.⁹⁷ Even the illiterate were capable of participating in the petitioning process.

Once a petition was written it needed to be presented to the authority addressed, be it the law courts, council, or crown. The processes through which this was done depended on who was being petitioned. Almost immediately on James's arrival into the realm, he was beset by a torrent of petitioners using the opportunity of the accession to issue requests and present grievances to him on his journey south.⁹⁸ This included petitions complaining of the growth of monopolies in Elizabeth's reign and, conversely, suits requesting monopolies.⁹⁹ In response, James issued new regulations for the hearing of petitions, ordering a select committee to examine petitions every Tuesday afternoon.¹⁰⁰ Whilst there is little evidence that this committee continued to exist, later

⁹⁵ For literacy and issues with measuring it, see Cressy, *Literacy*, ch. 2.

⁹⁶ Fox, *Oral and Literate*.

⁹⁷ For an example, see Fletcher, 'Petitioning', pp. 35-6; Falvey, "'Scandalus to us all'", p. 10.

⁹⁸ Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', p. 559.

⁹⁹ See Hoyle, *Heard Before the King*, pp. 6-7 for a petition against monopolies presented by the city of Bristol, and p. 7 for a petition against a monopoly of the cloth trade in Worcester.

¹⁰⁰ Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', p. 559.

changes to petitioning policy were directly influenced by the deluge of petitions sent to the King requesting favour, and often, patents. The publication of the *Book of Bounty* (1610) was an important effort to manage such suits. The tract described the types of rewards which subjects could request from the King, barring all from asking for any grants which were 'contrary to our lawes'.¹⁰¹ Its first point prohibited subjects from requesting monopolies, though did suggest that subjects could request patents for new inventions, 'so they be not contrary to the Law, nor mischeivous to the State.'¹⁰² As Hoyle argues, this was an attempt not only to control James's liberality in bestowing bounty but also to manage the sheer number of petitions with which he was presented.¹⁰³ Along with the publication of this book, a Commission for Suits was established earlier in 1609 and appointed to meet once or twice a week. Commissioners were charged with considering suits for projects and reporting on all petitions which 'require special knowledge or concern a particular interest, as of trade.'¹⁰⁴ They were in turn expected to report their findings to the Council.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the petitions of would-be projectors were frequently referred to the commissioners to ascertain which were reasonable suits and which were merely attempts to establish detrimental monopolies.¹⁰⁶

Despite the best intentions of these measures, incessant petitioners for monopolies continued to occupy the time and attention of king and council throughout James's reign. Attempts to reprint the *Book of Bounty* in 1618 and the appointment of yet another Commission for Suits by April 1618 once again tried to establish a more efficient process for managing supplications.¹⁰⁷ The efforts clearly failed; the issue of petitioning projectors dominated anti-monopoly debates in

¹⁰¹ See P. Davison, 'King James's Book of Bounty: From Manuscript to Print', *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 5:1 (1973) p. 26; Peck, *Northampton*, pp. 28-9; *CD 1621*, vii, p. 492.

¹⁰² *CD 1621*, vii, p. 493.

¹⁰³ Hoyle, 'Master of Requests', p. 560.

¹⁰⁴ *CD 1621*, vii, p. 492.

¹⁰⁵ *CD 1621*, vii, p. 492; Cramsie, *Kingship*, pp. 91-3.

¹⁰⁶ See Add MS 10038, fo. 37; Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', p. 561; Hoyle, *Heard Before the King*, p. 97

¹⁰⁷ For the appointment of this commission see Add MS 10038, fo. 2; 'Commission...to examine all suits and petitions', 14 Apr. 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 31r-v; 'Declaration of his Majesty's pleasure as to what suits shall be granted', Apr. 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 33r-37r; 'Copy of declaration', 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 40r-46v; 'Another copy of declaration', 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 47r-56r.

parliament in 1621. On 15 February 1621, Lionel Cranfield, drawing directly on his experience as a Master of Requests, commented on the sheer number of petitions proposing grants which included 'favourable shews of proffit' to entice king and council to grant them.¹⁰⁸ Whilst these petitions for projects have been considered in existent scholarship, the sheer number of petitions which challenged monopolies have received far less attention.

The issue of the state response to petitions generally, and the suggestion that petitioning was a legitimate and at times rather 'conservative' form of participation, has often been considered in pre-existing scholarship.¹⁰⁹ It has been suggested that petitions may have served as a form of 'safety-valve' in society, allowing the peaceful articulation of discontent and avoiding the outbreak of riots or rebellions.¹¹⁰ Such notions fit with a tendency for scholars to focus on whether petitions were humble and deferential documents, involving as they did subjects making requests to social superiors.¹¹¹ Zaret argues that petitions prior to the 1640s made few criticisms of authority and were heavily dictated by conventional rules of communication.¹¹² As such, they were not sophisticated interventions. In reality, petitioning needs to be regarded as a more complex and significant form of participation which could trigger different reactions from authority even before the advent of mass petitioning campaigns. The ability for these petitions to include thinly-veiled threats of disorder if demands were not met has been demonstrated by Walter, whilst Martin Almbjär has shown how authorities in early modern Norway and Prussia were so fearful of petitioning that they even cracked down on the activities of scribes who were seen as facilitating it.¹¹³ As suggested by Beat Kümin and Andreas Würigler, petitions which were seemingly deferential

¹⁰⁸ *CD 1621*, iv, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹ Hoyle, 'Popular Politics', p. 365.

¹¹⁰ M. Almbjär, 'The Problem with Early-Modern Petitions: Safety Valve or Powder Keg?', *European Review of History*, 26:6 (2019), pp. 1015-16.

¹¹¹ Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 137; Knights, *Representation*, p. 112; Cressy, *Charles I*, p. 178.

¹¹² Zaret, *Origins*, p. 90.

¹¹³ Walter, 'Public Transcripts', pp. 141-2; Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 128; Almbjär, 'The Problem with Early Modern Petitions', pp. 1025-6.

in tone could still carry an 'explosive potential.'¹¹⁴ For example, the language of 'rebels' in the sixteenth century was often petitionary.¹¹⁵

The means through which petitions were presented was also a source of concern. As in the case of the Dyers, the incessant presentation of suits could cause authorities to place limits on the ability for subjects to petition in future. In a draft proclamation prepared by Robert Cecil in the aftermath of the dissolution of parliament in 1610, James's perception of acceptable petitioning behaviour was given interesting consideration.¹¹⁶ 'All' of the king's 'lovinge subjects', it suggested

should at all tymes w[i]thout distinction in Parliam[en]^t or out of Parliament present vnto him any their Petitions and grevances contayninge particularity and beeing contayned w[i]thin that w[hi]^{ch} is proper to their persons or vocations, and beeing done, in a manner not clamorous or tumultuous...¹¹⁷

All subjects, of several 'states, conditions or professions' were encouraged to petition; this was a form of participation available to all social levels.¹¹⁸ However subjects were not to overstep their station and were clearly expected to petition only on matters which concerned their particular professions or status. They were not to deal with any matters which were 'farr aboute the Capacities of private subiects.'¹¹⁹ Such concerns would appear as a recurring theme in the 1620s, as James faced a realm animated by discussion of the Spanish Match and affairs in the Palatinate.¹²⁰

Acceptable petitioning behaviour was to be conducted without clamour or disorder. The presence of crowds when supplicating was a particular worry to authority; after the Restoration great efforts were taken to avoid petitions being presented by large gatherings.¹²¹ However this

¹¹⁴ Kümin and Würigler, 'Petitions', p. 59.

¹¹⁵ Hoyle, 'Petitioning as Popular Politics', pp. 383-5.

¹¹⁶ See *HMC, Hatfield House*, XXI, p. 320 for the suggestion that the decision not to issue the same may have been linked to the Commons' concern with number of proclamations in use.

¹¹⁷ 'Draft proclamations. Proclamation concerning liberty of speech', c. 1611, CP 129/26, fo. 26r.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ See T. Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹²¹ Knights, *Representation*, pp. 127-8.

thesis will demonstrate that anxiety towards disorderly petitioning was not confined to later periods; even supplications which did not gather large numbers of signatories could incur the displeasure of the Council and the King. In turn accusations of untoward petitioning activity became an important tactic used by patentees within counter-petitioning suits to undermine the supplications of their opponents. Despite these anxieties, petitioning activity was also frequently encouraged by authority throughout our period. At times supplications were even actively solicited as the Crown sought to consult public opinion on particular issues and demonstrate its concern with the grievances of the commonwealth. We see this especially in the context of economic depression in the 1620s. The complex attitude of authorities to petitioning practice, and the ways in which this was used by petitioners as a tactic in and of itself, will be shown to have been a crucial element in anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns.

Petitions were an accessible form of participation and a key part of the 'public transcript' between subordinate and socially superior subjects; they made use of language and terms expected of such transactions, including statements of humility and deference.¹²² Yet the language and sentiments expressed within supplications was often more tactical and targeted than sometimes assumed. This thesis will demonstrate that the rhetoric of petitioning campaigns was often highly sophisticated. It touched upon issues pertaining to the royal prerogative, liberties, factionalism, and even changing economic perceptions surrounding corporate regulation. This thesis will adopt a qualitative analysis of the language of petitions as found in the works of such scholars as Walter, Archer, Kyle, and Holmes.¹²³ Walter and Archer have argued for the capacity of petitioners to make use of discourses concerning the obligations of magistrates and the rule of law

¹²² Scott, *Domination*, p. 198.

¹²³ For such tactics in the medieval period, see also the work of W. M. Ormrod, 'Murmur, Clamour and Noise: Voicing Complaint and Remedy in Petitions to the English Crown, c. 1300-c.1460' in Ormrod, Dodd, and Musson (eds.), *Medieval Petitions*, pp. 135-55; S. A. Sneddon, 'Words and Realities: the Language and Dating of Petitions, 1326-7', in *Medieval Petitions*, pp. 193-204. For rhetoric adopted by females, see Worthen, 'Supplicants and Guardians', pp. 528-40; Peck, 'The Great Unknown', pp. 220-35.

to put pressure on social superiors to act.¹²⁴ Prominent ideas in the public transcript were utilised by subjects within their appeals. Deferential calls for aid and assistance in petitions should not necessarily be read as evidence of subjects' subordination, but as a means through which they negotiated with authority. Petitions could draw on a range of contextual issues to bolster their appeals, shaping their language to meet their intended audience. Holmes's analysis of petitions against fen drainage in the mid-seventeenth century has highlighted the capacity for petitioners to adapt their rhetoric to appeal to the sensibilities of the authorities they addressed.¹²⁵ Kyle has demonstrated such a tactic in use in 1621: both the Woodmongers' and Wharfingers' Companies drew on anti-monopoly sentiments prevalent in the Commons to appeal to parliament in their own inter-company dispute.¹²⁶ Petitioners were able to demonstrate much 'rhetorical craft' to achieve their aims.¹²⁷ Anti-monopoly petitioners also proved able to respond to prominent issues in public discourse and economic thought to produce highly sophisticated documents. They were far from formulaic or dictated by conventions alone.

The use of monopolies generated protest and debate in different institutions and in spaces beyond petitions. Whilst the articulation of anti-monopoly discontent in parliament and the law courts has been well-established in historiography, it is necessary here to recount these details better to understand the broader political and legal frameworks under which the monopolies issue was debated, contested, and devised.

¹²⁴ I. Archer, 'Rhetorics of Metropolitan Incorporation: The Dialogue Between City and Crown in Elizabethan London', in A. Roulet, O. Spina and N. Szczech (eds.), *Trouver sa Place. Individus et Communautés dans l'Europe Moderne* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 161-4; Walter, 'Public Transcripts', pp. 138-9.

¹²⁵ C. Holmes, 'Drainers and Fenmen: the Problem of Popular Political Consciousness in the Seventeenth Century', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 169.

¹²⁶ Kyle, 'Carting', p. 5.

¹²⁷ Davis, *Fiction*, pp. 82, 111-12. For the various 'pleading strategies' used by female litigants to the Court of Requests, see Stretton, *Waging Law*, ch. 8.

Monopolies were granted under the authority of the monarch's prerogative powers. Many constitutional theorists maintained that the monarch had two types of prerogative power, one 'ordinary' which allowed them to act through the common law, and one 'extraordinary' and extra-legal.¹²⁸ Cash-shortages led the Crown desperately to seek new sources of revenue in the later sixteenth century. This in turn led Elizabeth and James to raise revenues through the use of 'ill-defined, or resurrected, prerogative powers', including via impositions and monopolies.¹²⁹ Monopolies consequently raised fundamental ideological, constitutional, and legal questions surrounding the relationship between the prerogative and the liberties of the realm's subjects.¹³⁰ Many political questions in the period were considered in frameworks pertaining to subjects' rights and liberties and concerns with taxation emanated from larger concerns with property rights.¹³¹ This included the monopolies issue, a policy which traversed the political, economic, and legal sphere. England's common law was upheld by many adherents of the ancient constitution as a central pillar of the realm, strongly rooted in custom and praised for its highly rational nature.¹³² Lawyers and supporters of this ideological position saw the role of the Crown as protecting the private property and liberty of individuals, this being essential to maintain the public good of the realm.¹³³ Views that subjects should not be deprived of their property or be taxed without their consent (given through parliament) were particularly widespread.¹³⁴ Forms of prerogative taxation such as impositions were sometimes opposed beyond practical reasons alone but for wider issues of principle and liberties. Their use triggered concerns, often articulated in the Commons or by common law judges, that the monarch was not protecting the liberties of subjects by infringing on

¹²⁸ G. Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke and London, 1992), pp. 140-58.

¹²⁹ Holmes, 'Parliament', p. 129.

¹³⁰ For the concerns surrounding the monarch's rights to levy impositions using the prerogative, see Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, ch. 6.

¹³¹ M. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester, 1996), p. 131.

¹³² See Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, ch. 3; Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, ch. 2.

¹³³ Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, p. 84. For the importance of rights to property, see pp. 134-7.

¹³⁴ Holmes, 'Parliament', p. 137.

property rights and extracting money without consent.¹³⁵ Traditional beliefs that such concerns were a Stuart phenomenon, emblematic of James's 'absolutism', ignore the importance of these concepts in the late sixteenth century: they had a strong Elizabethan foundation.¹³⁶ As David Harris Sacks argues, liberty was essential to anti-monopoly attacks in parliament from the late Elizabethan period.¹³⁷ Ideas that liberty belonged to all freeborn Englishmen were increasingly articulated. Property was seen as an important bulwark protecting the subject from bondage, and one's trade was increasingly regarded as one form of property they held.¹³⁸ By depriving subjects of their rights to trade monopolies reduced men to a state of bondage and violated their absolute rights to property.¹³⁹

Anti-monopoly objections shaped around these very same ideas were articulated forcefully in parliament in 1601. Pre-existing historiography has focused extensively on the parliamentary opposition against monopolies in this session.¹⁴⁰ Numerous MPs lamented their concerns with the effect of specific monopolies on subjects in their localities, and manuscript lists of existing patents were circulated and collected by diarists.¹⁴¹ Debates were strongly couched in the language of liberty and oppression, and centred around these issues of prerogative, common law, and the public and private good.¹⁴² It was in this session that the London lawyer Richard Martin described

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 138; Braddick, *Nerves of State*, p. 133.

¹³⁶ On absolutism and property, see Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, chs. 4-5.

¹³⁷ See Sacks, 'Parliament, Liberty', pp. 85-121.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 100; Holmes, 'Parliament', p. 138.

¹³⁹ Sacks, 'Parliament, Liberty', pp. 98-9; D. H. Sacks, 'Private Profit and Public Good: the Problem of the State in Elizabethan Theory and Practice', in G. Schochet (ed.), *Law, Literature, and the Settlement of Regimes: Seminar on 'Political Thought in the Elizabethan Age, 1558-1603'* (Washington, 1990), p. 130. Similar ideas would be expressed by the Levellers in the 1640s, see A. Houston, "'A Way of Settlement": the Levellers, Monopolies and the Public Interest', *History of Political Thought*, 14:3 (1993), pp. 398-9; Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, p. 144; Holmes, 'Parliament', p. 138; Sacks, 'Parliament, Liberty', pp. 99-100.

¹⁴⁰ Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, pp. 376-92; Sacks, 'Counterveiling'; D. M. Dean, 'Parliament and Locality', in D. M. Dean and N. Jones (eds.), *The Parliaments of Elizabethan England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 159-60.

¹⁴¹ T. E. Hartley (ed.), *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, Volume 3 1593-1601* (3 vols, London and New York, 1995), iii, pp. 255, 382, 387-8.

¹⁴² Sacks, 'Private Profit and Public Good'; D. M. Dean, 'Public Space, Private Affairs: Committees, Petitions and Lobbies in the Early Modern English Parliament', in C. R. Kyle and J. Peacey (eds.), *Parliament at Work: Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 176-7.

monopolists as 'bloodsuckers of the commonwealth.'¹⁴³ The importance of the monopoly issue as a source of concern in the wider public sphere was made clear in these debates. Cecil lamented the widespread discussion of monopolies and parliamentary affairs 'in the streets.'¹⁴⁴ He informed the House that he had heard subjects cry out in support of all those who 'further the overthrowe of these monopolies.'¹⁴⁵ Even humble subjects were described as protesting monopolies through the frameworks of liberty and prerogative. Cecil reported that these same subjects had called on God to ensure that 'the prerogative touche nout our libertie.'¹⁴⁶

Petitions were also an important aspect of the narrative of this session. Elizabeth herself claimed that 'diverse petitions' had been handed to her whilst 'goeing to the chapple and alsoe to walke abroad.'¹⁴⁷ Subjects used the sitting of a parliament as an opportunity to offer their anti-monopoly suits, taking advantage of parliament's various access points.¹⁴⁸ The MP Sir Edward Hoby informed the House of the presence outside of the chamber of a group of subjects styling themselves as 'commonwealthe's men' who complained of being 'spoyled, imprisoned and robbed by monopolists.'¹⁴⁹ Ignoring all instructions to avoid petitioning with crowds or numbers, these subjects clearly believed that the House would prove receptive to their complaints, presenting themselves as literal defenders of the commonwealth. Ultimately, they were not to be disappointed. In response to the Commons' protests, Elizabeth issued a proclamation on 28 November cancelling a number of patents and ordering others to be reviewed by common law.¹⁵⁰ Addressing the Commons in the Golden Speech on 30 November, she justified her granting of monopolies by blaming the patentees who had allured her under false pretences.¹⁵¹ Whilst the

¹⁴³ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 375.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

¹⁴⁸ Dean, 'Public Space', pp. 169-78.

¹⁴⁹ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 390.

¹⁵⁰ *By the Queene. A proclamation for the reformation of many abuses and misdemeanours committed by patentees of certaine priuiledges and licences, to the generall good of all her Maiesties louing subiects* (1601; S.T.C. 8288).

¹⁵¹ Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*, pp. 389-92.

narrative of anti-monopoly debates in this parliament has been well established, the petitioning activity which preceded and followed these events has been less well understood.¹⁵²

Objections to monopolies were voiced not only in the Commons but also in common law courts. Elizabeth's proclamation had authorised monopolies to be reviewed by the common law. Following this, three cases became especially important for the consideration of their legality. William Letwin has demonstrated that all were strongly based on concerns with the right of subjects to trade.¹⁵³ Firstly, the case of *Davenant vs. Hurdis* (1599) focused on the use of restrictive by-laws by the London Merchant Tailors' Company. The Company had issued an ordinance in 1571 on cloth finishing which required members to ensure that half their cloths were given to poorer members of the Company to finish rather than sourced to outside labour.¹⁵⁴ The judgement reached rested primarily on the issue of the rights of subjects to exercise their trade; it decided that this by-law infringed the public good, providing the Merchant Tailors with powers fully to appropriate the cloth-finishing trade.¹⁵⁵

Even more important was the famous *Case of Monopolies* (1602) also known as *Darcy vs. Allen*.¹⁵⁶ The courtier Sir Edward Darcy (whom we shall meet again in chapter one) was bestowed a controversial monopoly for the sole making and selling of playing cards in 1598. All subjects were to pay for licences for permission to make or sell the same. This was resisted by a haberdasher named Thomas Allen who insisted on his rights as a freeman of London to sell goods and wares within the city. The case involved prominent lawyers such as Nicholas Fuller, a Puritan who would prove instrumental to our anti-monopoly petitioning campaign explored in chapter one. Ultimately the judges found in favour of Allen, declaring Darcy's patent to be an illegal monopoly. The legal

¹⁵² As early as 7 August Lord Treasurer Buckhurst wrote to Cecil stressing the need for the council to reform some monopolies before parliament sat. See 'Lord Buckhurst to Mr Secretary Cecil', 7 Aug. 1601, CP 87/70, fo. 70r.

¹⁵³ W. L. Letwin, 'The English Common Law concerning Monopolies', *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 21:3 (1954), pp. 355-85.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

¹⁵⁶ See Davies, 'Further Light'; S. T. Miller, 'The Case of the Monopolies: Some of its Results and Suggestions', *Michigan Law Review*, 6:1 (November, 1907), pp. 1-24.

judgement drew again on the notion that subjects should not be deprived of their right to exercise their trades.¹⁵⁷

Broader religious arguments were also used to oppose this monopoly. According to divine law, all men were required to exercise their God-given labours. Citing Deuteronomy, it was argued that to take away such labour was to take away a man's very life itself.¹⁵⁸ This case was also important for establishing more tangible conditions under which a patent could harm the realm and be classed as a monopoly: by raising prices, decreasing the quality of goods, and by excluding other traders.¹⁵⁹ As argued by Rosemary Sgroi, it also led to an articulation of the belief that bad patents were those which prioritised private gain over the wider public good of the realm.¹⁶⁰

A final case in 1614, the *Ipswich Tailors' Case* once again saw the questioning of the legality of a corporate by-law, which restricted trade to subjects who had served an apprenticeship with the Tailors' guild. In line with previous decisions, this was found invalid on the basis that it was against both law and liberties to prohibit men from exercising their trades.¹⁶¹ Interestingly, two out of three of these cases dealt not with individual patents of monopoly but rather with the restrictive practices of certain trade guilds, demonstrating further the blurred lines between legitimate organisations with exclusive rights and privileges and contested patents of monopoly.

Arguments pertaining to liberty and the commonwealth were thus essential to the common law attack on monopolies. In turn, these same concerns with liberty and the rights to trade would receive expression within many of our petitioning disputes. Sommerville has argued that ideological and constitutional objections to monopolies were voiced by merchants as they

¹⁵⁷ B. Hoxby, *Mammon's Music: Literature and Economics in the Age of Milton* (New Haven, 2002), p. 28. See pp. 38-47 for how such ideas were used to attack the monopoly of the Stationers' Company, on the basis that the book trade was one such form of labour.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28; B. Malament, 'The "Economic Liberalism" of Sir Edward Coke', *Yale Law Journal*, 76:7 (June, 1967), p. 1343.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1343-4.

¹⁶⁰ R. C. L. Sgroi, 'The Language of Economic Debate and Public Policy in the Elizabethan Commonwealth' (unpublished DPhil thesis; University of Oxford, 2001), pp. 208-10. Sgroi also argues that the misuse of commonwealth language to issue patents contributed to the increase of language speaking of public good and interest over the term 'commonwealth', p. 210.

¹⁶¹ Letwin, 'English Common Law', p. 364.

attempted to hide their self-interested motives for objecting grants.¹⁶² Yet the use of such arguments was more than a mere tactic. Broader beliefs and concerns with liberties, the commonwealth, and an awareness of rights bestowed by Magna Carta meant that many subjects articulated such rhetoric because they genuinely sought to protect their liberties.¹⁶³ These were not always inclusions offered by legal counsel alone, or rhetorical devices intended to cover selfish motivations. As such, they emerged as a common theme in many of our petitionary complaints.

Concerns with the commonwealth and the effect of monopolies on the public realm more broadly also need to be understood as part of the larger framework in which contemporaries understood economic issues. Medieval economic thought had long been dominated by notions of the 'moral economy', stressing the need for justice, fair markets, and just prices in commercial dealings.¹⁶⁴ Within commonwealth writings, figures including the engrosser, forestaller, and monopolist were widely condemned in society, criticised for raising prices and hoarding goods from markets for their private gain.¹⁶⁵ Norman Jones has argued that these perceptions and ideas were important for guiding the economic principles and actions of Burghley, who judged enterprises and projects on the basis that the needs of the commonwealth needed to be placed above those of the private individual.¹⁶⁶ Concepts of the importance of the public over the private good were essential.¹⁶⁷ As argued by Henry Turner, this became an important way through which humanist values could be reconciled with the world of merchants and profit, by stressing the collective public good which could come through trading ventures.¹⁶⁸ Sgroi has argued for the development of a

¹⁶² Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, p. 145.

¹⁶³ C. W. Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), ch. 13.

¹⁶⁴ See E. Erikson, *Trade and Nation: How Companies and Politics Reshaped Economic Thought* (New York, 2021), ch. 1.

¹⁶⁵ N. Jones, *God and the Moneylenders: Usury and Law in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 146-8; R. De Roover, 'Monopoly Theory Prior to Adam Smith: a Revision', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 65:4 (Nov., 1951), pp. 497-8.

¹⁶⁶ N. Jones, *Governing by Virtue: Lord Burghley and the Management of Elizabethan England* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 27-8; Jones, *Moneylenders*, p. 141.

¹⁶⁷ P. Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2014), p. 53.

¹⁶⁸ H. S. Turner, 'Corporations: Humanism and Elizabethan Political Economy', in P. J. Stern and C. Wennerlind (eds.), *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire* (Oxford, 2013), p. 155.

language of economic debate in Elizabethan England heavily shaped and influenced by the conception of the common good.¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth and James were able to dodge responsibility for unpopular patents by suggesting that courtiers had misled them to believe projects were for the wider good of the commonwealth.¹⁷⁰ Subjects were aware of the importance of this discourse; it was widely disseminated through devices including proclamations and sermons.¹⁷¹ As Phil Withington and Paul Slack argue, it emerged as an important ‘participatory tool’ deployed by subjects to criticise opponents and political enemies.¹⁷² Subjects proved adept at drawing on these very same ideas as they articulated their disdain and objections to numerous monopoly grants, especially in the 1590s.

Whilst conceptions of commonwealth and concerns with the moral economy remained a key aspect of economic thought and discourse into the Jacobean period, the turn of the seventeenth century witnessed developments in economic thought more broadly. The 1620s have been regarded as a crucial moment; the rise in pamphlet literature and mercantilist thought in the context of a widespread economic depression have been taken as evidence of the growing development of economics as a secular and separate sphere of study.¹⁷³ Older concerns with the morality of certain actions were replaced by growing notions of the importance of ‘improvement’ and in the political realm, ‘interest’.¹⁷⁴ As Jones has illustrated, condemnations of practices such as usury gave way to an acceptance of the need for this activity, and a belief in the benefits of greater

¹⁶⁹ Sgroi, ‘Language of Economic Debate’, pp. xxix – xxv, 77-8.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹⁷¹ Slack, *Invention*, p. 54; Holmes, ‘Parliament’, pp. 148-9.

¹⁷² P. Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: the Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 136; P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 12-13.

¹⁷³ Such ideas will be explored in chapter 4. See J. O. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-century England* (Princeton, 1978), ch. 2; Erikson, *Trade and Nation* for her argument that these changing economic ideas were caused by the exclusion of merchants from the state and the issue of corporatism, causing these figures to turn to pamphlet literature to explore such issues as national wealth, prosperity, and the role of corporations. She describes a ‘sea-change in economic thinking’, p. 6; De Roover, ‘Monopoly Theory’, pp. 507-8.

¹⁷⁴ See A. McRae, *God Speed the Plough: the Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 7, 18; Slack, *Invention*, p. 14.

individualism and liberalism in the economic actions of subjects.¹⁷⁵ Growth in commerce and overseas trade meant that subjects became increasingly concerned with issues including credit and bullion. These changes impacted perceptions of monopoly. The growing celebration of improvement and individual enterprise allowed projectors to flock to court in large numbers, petitioning for patents under the guise that their projects would improve the realm whilst simultaneously providing the Crown with the revenues it desired.¹⁷⁶ Pamphlet writers including Thomas Mun and Edward Misselden addressed perceptions of corporatism as they turned to print to defend the East India Company, whilst also espousing sophisticated ideas pertaining to the balance of trade, bullion, and commerce classed as ushering in a period of 'mercantilist thought'.¹⁷⁷ Yet the enduring importance of perceptions of the moral economy and public versus private good meant that older, Tudor styles of thinking about the economy continued to endure alongside these new ideas.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, ideas concerning the need to loosen some trading restrictions and views that private interests could potentially be harnessed for the public good began to emerge, ideas which directly impacted perceptions of corporatism.¹⁷⁹

Whilst such notions may have been articulated in this period it is important to acknowledge that corporatism and a belief in the need for regulation of trade remained central to economic thought. It was widely accepted that trade and commerce needed to be managed, subject to some degree of governance to ensure that order prevailed.¹⁸⁰ At no point was a demand for a laissez-

¹⁷⁵ Jones links this to religious changes, arguing that Puritan notions of the importance of individual decisions guiding actions was important for this process. See Jones, *Moneylenders*, p. 174.

¹⁷⁶ See McRae, *God Speed*, pp. 151-6 for the articulation of such ideas when proposing a project for the growing of woad in 1586; Slack, *Invention*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁷ Mercantilism has been seen as characterised by such issues as balance of trade, wish to secure national wealth, and bullion. See Appleby, *Economic Thought*, ch. 2; L. Magnusson, *Mercantilism: the Shaping of an Economic Language* (London and New York, 1994).

¹⁷⁸ For the notion that Coke's ideas remained decidedly Tudor in outlook, particularly as he remained concerned with the issue of private vs. public gains, see Malament, "Economic Liberalism", pp. 1346-7.

¹⁷⁹ P. Slack, 'The Politics of English Political Economy in the 1620s', in M. J. Braddick and P. Withington (eds.), *Popular Culture and Political Agency in Early Modern England and Ireland: Essays in Honour of John Walter* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 65-70; Slack, *Invention*, ch. 3.

¹⁸⁰ P. Stern, 'Companies: Monopoly, Sovereignty, and the East Indies', in P. J. Stern and C. Wennerlind (eds.), *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 187-9.

faire trading system articulated.¹⁸¹ The position of many of London's companies, both livery companies and mercantile trading companies, and their possession of royal patents does create some issues of definition which need to be considered. Charters allowed these companies to hold property, rights to self-government, and privileges over their respective trades.¹⁸² The subsequent relationship between company and the Crown has been considered by Rupali Mishra, who has suggested that the Crown was often willing to give authority to groups to carry out its aims in return for private privileges.¹⁸³ The granting of charters via the power of the royal prerogative served to make clear the relationship between company and crown, yet this was one categorised by negotiation concerning privileges and the meaning of letters patents.¹⁸⁴

In our period of study, distinctions were made between these charters and patents of monopoly. In parliament in 1601, Francis Bacon asserted that whilst a patent to a crown servant might be classed as a monopoly, if the Queen were to grant the same 'to a number of burgesses, or a corporacion, that must stand, and that forsooth is noe monopoly.'¹⁸⁵ Corporate order was perceived as beneficial. In a letter sent from Cecil to Popham in September 1605 concerning plans to re-incorporate the Levant Company, these ideas were clearly articulated. Cecil expressed his belief that, within trades, 'lacke of order makes much confusion'.¹⁸⁶ As Philip Stern argues, debates surrounding corporatism focused on the precise form the government and organisation of trade should take, as opposed to expressing a desire for the abolition of corporate institutions.¹⁸⁷ Corporations were after all essential in early modern society. They existed in towns and cities, in regulated or joint-stock form, and as groups of overseas traders.¹⁸⁸ Livery companies and

¹⁸¹ See G. Ramsay, 'Industrial Laissez-faire and the Policy of Cromwell', *Economic History Review*, 16:2 (1946), p. 93.

¹⁸² I. A. Gadd and P. Wallis, (eds.), 'Introduction', in idem (eds.), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London, 1450-1800* (London, 2002), p. 6.

¹⁸³ R. Mishra, *A Business of State: Commerce, Politics, and the Birth of the East India Company* (Cambridge MA, 2018), p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 150-1.

¹⁸⁵ Hartley *Proceedings*, p. 373.

¹⁸⁶ 'Earl of Salisbury to Lord Chief Justice Popham', 8 Sept. 1605, TNA, SP 14/15, fo. 84r.

¹⁸⁷ Stern, 'Companies', pp. 187-9.

¹⁸⁸ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 54-5.

mercantile trading companies were both present in the realm. Whilst accepted, they clearly blurred the lines between legitimate corporation and monopoly. They in effect were monopolistic bodies, possessing privileges to trade in certain products, geographical locations, or to manage and order specific trades. Companies thus blurred the boundaries between 'private' and 'public': whilst they possessed private rights, members were expected to use these for the public benefit of the realm.¹⁸⁹

In the Jacobean period, calls for a 'free trade' were made by subjects both within parliament and petitioning complaints.¹⁹⁰ In this context, specific corporations such as the Merchant Adventurers' Company were criticised and debates on corporatism entered the public sphere.¹⁹¹ It is important to clarify that such demands did not reflect the type of free trade seen today. Instead such calls articulated a desire for a loosening of trading restrictions, for example, through easing the entrance conditions required to join these corporations.¹⁹² In James's first parliament concerns with restrictive membership qualifications led to efforts to ensure that the newly incorporated Spanish Company was a more open institution.¹⁹³ Free trade debates in this session were triggered especially by outport concerns that Londoners were dominating the leadership of many trading institutions, in particular the Merchant Adventurers' Company.¹⁹⁴ As Pauline Croft has demonstrated, specific economic concerns could cause opposition to particular companies which had little to do with a disdain for corporations in general.¹⁹⁵ Whilst the

¹⁸⁹ Mishra, *Business of State*, p. 119.

¹⁹⁰ See chapter 4.

¹⁹¹ Erikson, *Trade and Nation*; Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, pp. 71-5.

¹⁹² De Roover, 'Monopoly Theory', p. 511.

¹⁹³ P. Croft, 'Introduction: the Revival of the Company, 1604-6', in idem (ed.), *The Spanish Company* (London, 1973), *BHO*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol9/xxix-li> [accessed 2 Sep. 2021].

¹⁹⁴ For differing interpretations of the precise motives of these attacks and the role of the outports, see R. Ashton, 'The Parliamentary Agitation for Free Trade in the Opening Years of the Reign of James I', *Past and Present* 38 (Dec., 1967), pp. 40-55; Ashton, *City and the Court*, pp. 83-100; T. K. Rabb, 'Sir Edwin Sandys and the Parliament of 1604', *American Historical Review*, 69:3 (Apr., 1964), pp. 646-70; P. Croft, 'Parliamentary Preparations, September 1605: Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury on Free Trade and Monopolies', *Parliamentary History*, 6:1 (Jan., 1987), pp. 127-32; P. Croft, 'Free Trade and the House of Commons, 1605-6', *Economic History Review*, 28:1 (Feb., 1975), pp. 17-27.

¹⁹⁵ Croft, 'Introduction'.

monopolistic practices and restrictive nature of some corporations were thus attacked, contemporaries still believed in the need for an economic system governed and ordered through corporate institutions. The passing of *An Act concerning Monopolies and Dispensations with penall Lawes and the Forfeiture thereof* (21 Jac 1, c. 3), known as the Statute of Monopolies, would exempt corporations from its provisions, leading to the incorporation of a torrent of new companies in Charles's reign.¹⁹⁶ Debates surrounding legitimate and monopolistic corporations and calls for a greater freedom of trade will be the focus of our second and fourth chapters, as we focus on anti-monopoly opposition expressed against a new Jacobean domestic company, the Starchmakers' Company, and later against the overseas trading company the Merchant Adventurers.

London's companies emerged as prominent petitioners against monopoly grants throughout the period in question. A distinction must be made between London's livery companies and its overseas trading companies including such organisations as the Merchant Adventurers, Eastland Company, or East India Company. Whilst the domestic livery companies tended to organise around a particular trade or industry, for example the Clothworkers around the cloth trade, chartered trading companies were organised around overseas trade. Companies could either be regulated or joint stock, the latter allowing individuals to invest capital in lucrative new enterprises. New companies were chartered in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods including the Muscovy and Virginia Companies, taking advantage of new trade routes.¹⁹⁷ Closer to home, London's domestic

¹⁹⁶ See R. G. Asch, 'The Revival of Monopolies: Court and Patronage during the Personal Rule of Charles I, 1629-1640', in R. G. Asch and A. M. Birke (eds.), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: the Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 357-92. Also see Letwin, 'English Common Law', pp. 366-7, for the suggestion that this statute provides evidence that the common law was not always opposed to monopolies.

¹⁹⁷ C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700. Volume II: Industry, Trade and Government* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1984), pp. 193-7.

livery companies were also essential spaces for citizens; membership bestowed on subjects the city freedom and numerous accompanying rights.¹⁹⁸ They were crucial organisations working to regulate trade, apprenticeships, and to support their members. By the late sixteenth century, as many as 70 companies were recognised by the city, and membership was quite widespread, with estimates suggesting that as many as three-quarters of adult males in London were members.¹⁹⁹

Suggestions have been made that the power of these companies was in decline by the early seventeenth century, as many struggled to maintain control over the regulation of the trades in the ever-expanding suburbs.²⁰⁰ Yet it is evident that London's corporations remained a powerful political and economic force in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, dominating positions in city government.²⁰¹ Whilst some companies declined in importance, new corporations were created. The early seventeenth century was a particularly important period for the creation of new corporate bodies, a trend which will be explored in chapter two.²⁰² Many possessed a close relationship with the Crown, acting as an important source of loans, and relations were fostered between merchants and the larger court.²⁰³ However the relationship was also at times fraught with tensions and characterised by frequent negotiation.²⁰⁴ Many companies were politically active as lobbyists to crown, council, and parliament; their financial resources and contacts meant they were well placed to follow affairs in court and parliament and lobby on matters concerning trade.²⁰⁵ These bodies were therefore highly active in the political sphere, advising on policy and allying with

¹⁹⁸ See I. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 4; S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), ch. 7.

¹⁹⁹ Gadd and Wallis, 'Introduction', pp. 3-5.

²⁰⁰ See J. R. Kellett, 'The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trade in London', *Economic History Review*, 10:3 (1958), pp. 381-2.

²⁰¹ Pearl, 'Change and Stability', pp. 8, 13. For changes from domination of members of the Adventurers' Company to the East-India Company, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 3.

²⁰² F. J. Fisher, 'Some Experiments in Company Organisation in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 4:2 (1933), pp. 177-94.

²⁰³ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 54-55, 63; R. Ashton, 'Revenue Farming under the Early Stuarts', *Economic History Review*, 8:3 (1956), pp. 310-22; E. Smith, *Merchants: The Community that Shaped England's Trade and Empire* (New Haven and London, 2021), p. 176.

²⁰⁴ Stern, 'Companies', pp. 178-80; Mishra, *Business of State*, ch. 6.

²⁰⁵ See Dean, 'Pressure Groups'; Dean 'Public or Private?'; Archer, 'London Lobbies'; Kyle, *Theater*, ch. 5; Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, ch. 10; I. A. Gadd, "'Being like a field": Corporate Identity in the Stationers' Company 1557-1684' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1999), ch. 4.

courtiers to serve their own specific agendas. Whilst much recent historiography has focused on the role and development of overseas trading companies in this period, including the East India and Virginia Companies, this thesis will focus predominantly on the role and prevalence of London's domestic corporations.²⁰⁶

The importance of the experience of corporate citizenship and the political culture of companies and incorporated boroughs has been examined by Phil Withington. For many non-elite subjects, membership in companies and city commonwealths allowed them experiences in office holding and opportunities for active participation in spaces which acted as 'microcosms' of the state.²⁰⁷ Members gained experience of petitioning which proved to be important for their consequent anti-monopoly protests. They frequently appealed to their company courts to lament the failures of their leaders to perform their duties relating to matters including the employment of strangers and apprentices.²⁰⁸ Members of the yeomanry within companies, which included more humble journeymen and poorer householders, could make their grievances heard by petitioning their court of assistants.²⁰⁹ To do so, they could use their own literacy skills, seek the help of fellow literate members, or use company scribes.

This should not cause us to suggest that these petitions were merely the work of clerks and scribes alone; as Joseph Ward has demonstrated, company members frequently met to produce rough drafts of petitions before passing these onto clerks to check and edit, sometimes in public spaces outside of official company meetings.²¹⁰ The initiative to petition could also come from

²⁰⁶ Mishra, *Business of State*; M. Ewen, 'Women Investors and the Virginia Company in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 62:4 (2019), pp. 853-74; T. K. Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (London, 1999).

²⁰⁷ P. Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 13-14, 127-31; Mishra, *Business of State*, p. 36. For a study of corporate identity in the Stationers' Company, see Gadd, "'Being like a field'"; Smith, *Merchants*, ch. 2.

²⁰⁸ Withington, *Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 174-6. For a study of female livery members and their use of petitioning to request the city freedom see L. Gowing, *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth Century London* (Cambridge, 2022), ch. 6; Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 106, 124-9, 141; Rappaport, *Worlds*, p. 241; J. Forbes, 'Search, Immigration and the Goldsmiths' Company: a Study in the Decline of its Powers', in Gadd and Wallis (eds.), *Guilds, Society & Economy*, pp. 120-2; Gadd, "'Being like a field'", ch. 4 for focus on corporate petitions in Stationers' Company.

²⁰⁹ For distinctions between the yeomanry and livery see Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 219-28.

²¹⁰ Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, pp. 74-8, 96-7.

below. In January 1621, retailing members of the Grocers' Company asked the larger company for assistance to help them prepare a bill against monopolies to parliament.²¹¹ At times, the yeomanry within companies could be especially active petitioners without the knowledge of the wider company. The Clothworkers' Company account books are full of instances in which the yeomanry petitioned parliament and council without the knowledge of their wardens, masters, and the livery.²¹² Attempts by apothecaries within the Grocers' Company to receive their own incorporation led them to petition James over the heads of company leaders in April 1614. Whilst the Company were not happy with these attempts, they still acknowledged that 'yt is lawfull for ev[er]y subject to petic[i]on to his prince and Sovereigne.'²¹³ London's companies must therefore be regarded as important spaces facilitating petitioning activity both within and outside of company organisation. On the issue of monopolies, this experience would be vital for ensuring that members were well versed in the practice of petitioning.

Equally, subjects proved able to organise petitioning campaigns outside of the auspices of corporate organisation. Groups of artisans with shared interests proved able to launch quite extensive, and at times, prolonged petitioning campaigns. For example, disaffected glassmakers based in London and the Weald organised collective supplications to protest glass monopolies throughout James's reign. Subjects also proved capable of moving across company lines to organise and fund supplications with craftsmen and artisans with whom they had common interests. In addition, unincorporated bodies who had not yet achieved official charters proved able to organise and lobby. The case studies examined in this thesis will reveal that it was not just corporate bodies who were involved in anti-monopoly petitioning protest.

Finally, the organisation of subjects into different corporate bodies must not be regarded as representative of the existence of a neat patchwork of separate interests in the city. London

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 95; GL, Orders of the Court of Assistants of the Grocers 1616-1639, MS 1588/003, pp. 165-6.

²¹² For instances of this within the Clothworkers' Company, especially for petitions by company members instigating the infamous Cockayne project in 1613, see CL, Court Orders 1605-1623, CL/B/1/4, fos. 114v, 119v, 121v, 188r-189r; Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 122-5; Archer, *Pursuit*, p. 148.

²¹³ GL, Grocers' Court Minute Book, 1591-1616, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/002, p. 814.

consisted of an amalgamation of different interests, many of which fought to protect their own respective privileges and agendas. This plurality of interests translated into numerous instances of conflict and much competition between bodies.²¹⁴ Even within companies, internal conflicts were common. The custom of London allowed freemen to practice any trade they wished. As such, some members of companies practiced trades different from their fellow brethren, affecting the collective identity of organisations.²¹⁵ Conflicts between artisan members and corporate leaders could occur in organisations where both carried different interests.²¹⁶ This was especially the case when merchant leaders were more invested in overseas trade, in contrast to their artisan brethren. Tensions within companies needed to be negotiated. Whilst George Unwin previously painted a picture of corporations beset by conflicts, more recent work by Archer has demonstrated that the degree of conflict or harmony within corporations varied.²¹⁷ The ability to channel disputes within company structures, for example via intra-company petitioning activity, sometimes helped to resolve potential areas of conflict.²¹⁸

Throughout this thesis, attention will be paid to instances where internal conflicts within trades and corporate bodies impacted monopoly petitioning campaigns. Subjects did divide on the issue of monopolies. New patents were granted which tested company cohesion, causing large and public rifts within companies and industries as differing interests supported or opposed grants. As will be demonstrated in our first three chapters, artisans could join in alliance with courtiers and patentees as part of their attempts to achieve separation from their larger corporations, and recognition as their own chartered bodies. The complex political environment of the city will be revealed through an analysis of the disputes and contests created by monopolies, and the existence

²¹⁴ For example, see Kyle, 'Carting'; Ashton, 'Conflicts'.

²¹⁵ Archer, *Pursuit*, p. 115; N. Carlin, 'Levelling the Liveries: Some Aspects of the Outlook of Craftsmen in London Livery Companies of the Mid-Seventeenth Century', *Middlesex Polytechnic history journal*, 1:4 (1984), p. 6.

²¹⁶ See Carlin, 'Levelling'; Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 103-22 for older arguments that disputes occurred between craftsmen and merchant leaders in companies; Archer, *Pursuit*, pp. 100-1.

²¹⁷ Archer, *Pursuit*, ch. 4. Such events as company feasts and the provision of charity also helped to foster this sense of corporate community.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

of an atmosphere where a cacophony of divergent interests used petitions to further their own economic agendas. Subjects on both sides of these disputes presented what Michael Braddick has termed as competing truth claims, creating rival accounts of the effects of these monopolies as each tried to position themselves as the authoritative voice speaking for the good of the commonwealth.²¹⁹ Discourses and ideas in shared political culture were used by different economic interests as each tried to pursue their own partisan agendas.²²⁰

Monopolies were a crucial issue animating public opinion in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. In response, subjects sent petitions to authority expressing discontent with the effects of monopolies on their trades and livelihoods. This thesis will focus on hitherto overlooked petitioning campaigns to shed light not only on manuscript petitioning culture, but also on the strong intersection between economic concerns and the political at the turn of the seventeenth century. By adopting a case study approach analysing campaigns across this period, a detailed and qualitative analysis of these petitions will be possible, allowing a study of such features as the rhetoric employed by subjects and the various negotiation strategies used when communicating with authority. This in turn serves to illustrate the interaction of traders, merchants, and artisans with the larger political circumstances in which they were petitioning. Issues including the prerogative, common law, and factionalism dominated discourse not only in central political spaces, but within these supplications as subjects turned to contest, sometimes relentlessly, this burdensome economic policy. Further, changing ideas in the economic sphere including ideas of corporatism and 'free trade' were engaged with by subjects attempting to achieve redress. This thesis will highlight the need to consider petitions as an important source providing insight into

²¹⁹ M. Braddick, *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (London, 2008), p. 459.

²²⁰ M. Braddick, 'Mobilisation, Anxiety and Creativity in England during the 1640s', in J. Morrow and J. Scott (eds.), *Liberty, Authority, Formality: Political Ideas and Culture, 1600-1900* (Exeter, 2008), pp. 239-40.

changing economic discourses, whilst demonstrating the need to broaden our perceptions of the types of subjects who can be considered as 'economic thinkers' in this period.²²¹ It will also argue for the success petitions could have in influencing patent policy, thus demonstrating the importance of petitions as a medium capable of having tangible effects on economic policy.²²²

Throughout this thesis, attention will also be directed to the myriad counter-petitions written by patentees and rival companies, drawing attention to the clear dialogic element in the petitioning process.²²³ These documents also reveal the skilled use of specific discursive mechanisms by subjects as well as a larger engagement with such modes of thinking as 'politic reasoning.'²²⁴ Noah Millstone has highlighted the importance of this Tacitean mode of thinking in the early Stuart period, as contemporaries came to view events in terms of larger frameworks of factions and plots.²²⁵ Such modes of narration were important to politic histories of both the court and parliament. This mode of thought also became important to anti-monopoly petitioning discourse, as patentees, threatened by the suits levied against them, worked to persuade authority of the unjust nature of these self-interested and factional complaints. Overall, the sheer sophistication of these manuscripts will be emphasised, challenging assumptions that petitions prior to the 1640s were highly formulaic, deferential, and devoid of concern with national issues. The thesis will also focus on new institutions created to receive petitions, most notably, Commissions for Trade established in 1622. Through an analysis of a vast quantity of manuscript sources, including extensive use of the rich archives of London's companies, the sheer importance

²²¹ For calls for the need to broaden our understandings see P. J. Stern and C. Wennerlind, 'Introduction', in idem (eds.), *Mercantilism Reimagined*, p. 7.

²²² For impact of petitions on Venetian economic policy, see M. Van Gelder, 'How to Influence Venetian Economic Policy: Collective Petitions of the Netherlandish Merchant Community in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 24:1 (2009), pp. 29-47.

²²³ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, p. 286.

²²⁴ N. Millstone, 'Seeing Like a Statesman in Early Stuart England', *Past and Present*, 223 (May, 2014), pp. 77-127.

²²⁵ Ibid. See also N. Millstone, 'The Politic History of Early Stuart Parliaments', in P. R. Cavill and A. Gajda (eds.), *Writing the History of Parliament in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Manchester, 2018), pp. 172-93.

of manuscript materials for illuminating the inseparability of the political and the economic spheres will also be demonstrated.

Chapter one will begin in the 1590s, drawing on the case of Sir Edward Darcy's patent for leather and the petitioning opposition of the Leathersellers' Company. This campaign will be used to analyse the process of petitioning activity both within and outside of official company structures, as well as illuminating the engagement by petitioners with prominent issues in political and religious culture pertaining to prerogative, common law, and liberties. In the context of the 1590s, petitioners' skilful appeals to issues of public order will also be demonstrated. This chapter also provides an important example of the ability for petitions to trigger real changes in monopoly policy, and the crucial importance of support by city authorities for petitioning campaigns.

Chapter two will consider the Jacobean accession and the continued prevalence of monopolies in the new king's reign. Despite initial promises to reform their use, James's desperate cash shortages meant that the monopoly problem only deepened, and subjects' hopes for their widespread revocation quickly dissipated. This chapter will focus especially on the monopolisation of starch and the establishment of a new domestic corporation, the Starchmakers' Company (1607) to control its use. The petitioning opposition of the Grocers' Company will be the focus, as well as a targeted counter-response. The rhetoric used in the context of the recent accession will be analysed, as well as the dialogic element of this petitioning campaign. An examination of the complex means through which starch came to be controlled by a court-based syndicate will also highlight the extent of interactions between court and city made possible during this era where the granting of monopolies was so extensive.

Chapter three will proceed to consider two monopolies for glass held by the courtiers Sir Edward Zouch and Sir Robert Mansell in the 1610s and 1620s. Disputes in this case were directed to two institutions: a new commission created to deal with petitioning complaints and parliament. The chapter will focus especially on a parliamentary petitioning campaign opposing these creations, whilst considering the role of larger developments in the Commons on petitioning activity.

Attention will also be drawn to the ability of petitioners to utilise pertinent discourses so present in wider court politics in the 1620s, revealing an engagement with modes of politic reasoning within the economic as well as the political sphere.

Finally, chapter four will examine the outbreak of economic depression in the realm in the 1620s, focusing not on a particular patent but on accusations of monopolistic practices made against the Merchant Adventurers' Company. Rival companies and county petitions expressed disdain for the Adventurers' monopolisation of the cloth trade, in a period of widespread economic depression throughout Europe. Supplications were chiefly sent through the hitherto underexamined bodies of the temporary and permanent Commissions for Trade. Demonstrating the importance of these commissions for the subsequent reduction of the Adventurers' privileges, this chapter will stress the need to regard the anti-monopoly petitions to this body as a crucial indicator that the Crown could use petitions as part of its efforts to solicit public opinion. Once again, it also highlights another form of institutional change essential for the petitioning process, whilst suggesting the role of petitions as a means through which the terms of patents were negotiated with authority. The ability of petitioners to engage with sophisticated economic thinking will also be illustrated, highlighting the importance of the manuscript supplication as a source providing insight into changing economic perceptions and discourses.

The proliferation of monopolies in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period can be studied beyond considerations of crown financial policy or patronage alone. As subjects reacted to the increased and unwelcome presence of 'bloodsuckers of the commonwealth' amongst their midst, supplications became a frequent and powerful means for them to articulate their protests. It is to these that we must now turn.

Chapter one

'Catterpillars in the Comon Wealth': Sir Edward Darcy, the leather industry, and the London Leathersellers' Company (1592-1596)

Soodainly [he] strake the sayed S[i]r George Barne w[i]th his fist on the face in most violent manner whearew[i]th the blood gusshing out & embreuing his face, his eye also was in great danger by the force of the stroak.¹

On 22 March 1593 the London Court of Aldermen hurriedly wrote to Lord Burghley informing him of 'a great abuse comitted by Mr Darsey...against S[i]r George Barne.'² Sir Edward Darcy, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, was accused of having acted in a 'very vnseemly and vndecent manner' as he displayed 'furious & outrageous beehavio^r', physically assaulting the knight and alderman Sir George Barne the previous afternoon.³ The incident was perceived as all the more shocking given that it had been committed against an 'ancient & Alderman of this Citie' in the 'house & presence' of the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Rowe, the chief 'preserver of the peace' in the city.⁴ The aldermen thus urged Burghley to ensure that 'so great an abuse to god', which would set an 'evill & dangerous example' would not go 'vnpunished'.⁵

For the aldermen writing to Burghley, this attack had not been a random act of violence. Rather, it was part of the recent controversy surrounding Darcy's receiving of a patent for the searching and sealing of leather. The patent provided this courtier with a monopoly on the leather industry and more particularly over leather markets. Leather goods were to be searched for deceits and abuses in their dressing by Darcy or his deputies and sealed using Darcy's own stamp as a form of quality control check. Only those goods sealed were fit to be sold, and subjects had to pay fees to receive the same. Darcy had been awarded this patent both as a reward for his loyal service and due to his own promise that it would ensure abuses in the leather trade would be 'easeli^e, and orderly reformed.'⁶

¹ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/001, fo. 334v.

² Ibid., fo. 334r.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., fo. 334v.

⁵ Ibid., fo. 335r.

⁶ BL, Lans. MS 74/40, fo. 114r.

As the incident in Rowe's house made clear, this patent was far from an 'easy' means of reforming abuses. In actuality, the reason behind the quarrel between Barne and Darcy was deeply embedded in the controversy surrounding Darcy's patent. Meeting on the afternoon of 21 March, Barne, Darcy, and the city Remembrancer Giles Fletcher had gathered to discuss the details of a meeting to be held between the Attorney General, Solicitor General, and city authorities on the legality of Darcy's grant. The patent had caused such opposition within London that the mayor and aldermen had articulated their concern with it directly to Burghley on 27 January, triggering this planned conference.⁷ On the afternoon in question, Barne and Fletcher turned to a discussion of the terms of the patent, complaining of the 'hard and excessive fees' imposed by Darcy for his seals.⁸ It is within this context, with tensions running high between Barne and Darcy, that the alleged incident took place.

Yet the dispute concerning this patent was not confined to these two men alone. The aldermen were at pains to stress the danger Darcy was in due to his very presence in London, a danger which would have only escalated if knowledge of this assault had spread amongst 'the apprentices & others dwelling thereabouts.'⁹ The aldermen stressed their fear of the potential gathering of 'popular multitudes' on account of the 'originall occasion of M^r Darseys negotiating wⁱth the Citie': his patent.¹⁰ They were keen to warn the Council of the threat this posed, expressing their concern that subjects assembled in crowds 'can hardly bee suppressed & kept within obedience.'¹¹ They concluded by describing Darcy's patent as 'a thing not very gratefull to the common sort of o[u]r Citizens nor to any other of hir Ma[jes]t[ie]s as wee doe suppose.'¹² The tensions which had erupted in Rowe's house were therefore presented as part of a widespread

⁷ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/001, fos. 328v-329r.

⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 334r.

⁹ *Ibid.*, fo. 334v.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, fos. 334v-335r.

feeling of popular discontent with Darcy, a discontent which city authorities feared they may not be able to control.

The city's disapproval of this patent would only continue. The lord mayor and aldermen remained staunch opponents of Darcy's grant, articulating their discontent in repeated letters and communications with the Council. Correspondence was not the only means through which this discontent was articulated. Between 1592-1596 a relentless opposition campaign was launched against this unpopular monopoly, involving a variety of disgruntled artisans and leather workers, chief of whom were members of the ancient London Leathersellers' Company, who resented the interference of a courtier in their long-established trade and industry. Whilst they may not have turned to the use of rebellion or riot, these subjects turned to another important means of participation to express their discontent: petitioning.

Historians have made only brief references to Darcy's monopoly and the petitions it provoked. Specific histories of the Leathersellers' Company have noted the opposition caused by Darcy's patent within larger narratives charting the broader development of the Company.¹³ Both Tyacke and Hunting have briefly considered this episode, with Tyacke citing this petitioning campaign as one example of the 'chorus of complaint' triggered by the Crown's widespread use of monopolies in the 1590s.¹⁴ Archer has offered the most comprehensive analysis of the episode to date, using the petitions of the Leathersellers' Company as an example of the lobbying activity of London's companies in late Elizabethan England.¹⁵ Archer's larger analysis of exchanges between city and crown has demonstrated the ability for subjects to appropriate the state's own discourses when appealing to authority, as revealed in anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns such as that of the Leathersellers.¹⁶ Archer has considered the use of such rhetoric in one petition in this case, the

¹³ P. Hunting, *The Leathersellers' Company: A History* (London, 1994), pp. 38-9; W. H. Black, *History and Antiquities of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers of the City of London* (London, 1871), p. 50.

¹⁴ Tyacke, 'Locating the 'English Revolution'', pp. 1-27; Hunting, *Leathersellers' Company*, pp. 38-9. See also R. W. Waggett, *A History of the Worshipful Company of Glovers of London*, 2nd edn (Chichester, 2008), pp. 12-14; Unwin, *Gilds*, p. 299.

¹⁵ Archer, 'Rhetorics', pp. 153-67; Archer, 'London Lobbies', pp. 17-44.

¹⁶ Archer, 'Rhetorics', pp. 153, 162-3.

‘Reasons and Resolutions’, which he argues contained a strong appeal to common law, history, and the power of the royal prerogative.¹⁷ The following chapter will expand on such analyses, offering an examination of the Darcy petitioning campaign in its entirety, as a vital window through which to observe the practice and importance of anti-monopoly petitioning activity in late Elizabethan England. The sheer number of petitions for this case extant across a variety of archives allows a more thorough analysis of this episode than hitherto attempted, providing a particularly rich case study to open this thesis.

Throughout the chapter, particular attention will be paid to the ways in which the rhetoric adopted by petitioners was impacted by larger contextual concerns and circumstances. As John Guy argues, the 1590s were a period of social tension in Elizabeth’s realm, witnessing as they did war, plague, inflation, and dearth.¹⁸ Political problems outside of the factional politics of the court were also rife.¹⁹ This was a period of constitutional tensions as the means of augmenting crown finances – from the demands for multiple subsidies in parliament to the granting of monopolies to courtiers under the royal prerogative – enhanced hostile debate in the wider political community and in parliament itself. These issues provide more than just background information for understanding the broader period in which this petitioning campaign occurred: references to the supremacy of common law, prerogative, dearth, and poverty were made by subjects as they petitioned against Darcy’s monopoly. Ideas and debates prevalent in religious politics surrounding the issues of liberty and the prerogative also correlated with arguments used in the economic sphere to protest monopolies. By focusing on the rhetoric adopted by petitioners (and sometimes by the legal counsel who helped to write these supplications), the sophistication and contextual awareness existent in manuscript supplications will be demonstrated, as well as the ability for subjects to draw on issues and language present in the ‘public transcript’ to negotiate with

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

¹⁸ Guy, ‘The 1590s’, pp. 9-11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

authority.²⁰ By using discourses so prevalent in political culture, different sides in this dispute attempted to further their own economic interests whilst presenting themselves as the voice of authority on the leather trade.

The courtiers craved all, the Queen granted all.²¹

In response to the increased issuing of patents of monopoly in the Elizabethan period, an anonymous author wrote a libel critiquing Elizabeth's liberal attitude towards the bestowing of these favours. The source is illustrative of the extent to which monopolies inflamed public opinion. Darcy's patent was one of the most egregious examples of the scandalous turn in monopoly policy. By October 1601, a list of 23 existing monopolies which councillors feared might trigger discontent in the forthcoming parliament was prepared. It attests to the range of products and trades which had been monopolised, from the making of paper to the production of bullet boxes.²² From the 1580s petitions had been sent to the Council and crown by subjects lamenting the effect such monopolies had on their trades and livelihoods.²³ Many patents affected London directly, triggering discontent from livery companies and city authorities. A patent granted to the courtier Sir Richard Drake in 1594 for the making of beer and ale to be used in the production of vinegar, aquavita, and aquacomposita triggered strong protests from the Brewers' Company, articulated to both parliament and the Council via petitionary complaints.²⁴ Monopolies had well and truly become a

²⁰ Walter, 'Public Transcripts', pp. 123-49; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 4.

²¹ 'Verse against monopolies', c. 1558-1603, TNA, SP 46/26, fo. 148.

²² 'Note of 23 monopolies', c. Oct. 1601, TNA, SP 12/282, fos. 52r-53r.

²³ For examples see R. H. Tawney and E. Power (eds.), *Tudor Economic Documents: Being Select Documents Illustrating the Economic and Social History of Tudor England* (3 vols, London, 1924), ii, pp. 246-51, 254-7, 259-62; BL, Lans. MS 74/1-9, fos. 2r-19v.

²⁴ Brewers' Company Court Minutes 1590-97, GL, CLC/L/BF/B/001/MS05445/009; BL, Lans. MS 74/10-12, fos. 20r-25v.

dominant aspect of the political landscape, a central policy which so animated subjects that many turned to petitioning to bemoan their effects.

Elizabeth's increased use of this prerogative fiscal device also generated larger constitutional tensions, interacting as it did with contentious issues concerning the relationship between the royal prerogative, the common law, and the nature of the Elizabethan constitution.²⁵ During the 1580s and the 1590s, constitutional tensions concerning the prerogative and law erupted in the religious politics of the period.²⁶ The use of the prerogative court of High Commission and the controversial oath *ex officio mero* raised questions pertaining to common law principles and the relationship between prerogative and law.²⁷ These languages and themes also appeared in the economic sphere, as the use of monopolies touched on the very same tensions surrounding prerogative, common law, and liberties.²⁸ These debates and vocabularies were pervasive, thus emerging as bargaining strategies utilised by subjects in the economic sphere.

Darcy's patent for leather cannot be fully understood without some awareness of the organisation and scale of the early modern leather industry. The leather trade was one of England's most important industries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was vital for the making of goods in demand throughout the nation including shoes, saddles, and gloves.²⁹ Numerous artisans and craftsmen were involved in both the making of leather and in the translation of the

²⁵ For a challenge to the notion of a consensus in ideas of the mixed monarchy and a thinker who espoused absolutist views in the Elizabethan period, see R. Rapple, 'Elizabethan Absolutism and Tamburlaine's Tents: Sir Humphrey Gilbert Reads *De Republica Anglorum*', *English Historical Review*, 132:554 (Feb., 2017), pp. 13-40.

²⁶ Guy, 'Introduction', p. 11; Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society*, p. 97.

²⁷ J. Guy, 'The Elizabethan Establishment and the Ecclesiastical Policy', in idem (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 130; R. Giurato, 'The Language of Constitutionalism and the Royal Prerogative in the English Parliament of 1593: James Morice's Speech on the *Ex Officio* Proceedings and His Constitutional Thought', *Parliamentary History*, 37:3 (2018), pp. 328-9; E. Shagan, 'The English Inquisition: Constitutional Conflict and Ecclesiastical Law in the 1590s', *Historical Journal*, 47:3 (Sept., 2004), pp. 543-4; Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society*, pp. 103-8. For the place of prerogative and the common law in the 'ancient constitution', see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: a study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century: A Re-issue with a Retrospect* (Cambridge, 1987); Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, pp. 5-6.

²⁸ Sacks, 'The Countervailing of Benefits' pp. 272-92.

²⁹ See L. A. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', *The Agricultural History Review*, 14:1 (1966), p. 26.

same into finished products. For example, tanners, curriers, and whittawyers were important for the production of leather, whilst groups such as cordwainers, saddlers, and glovers made leather goods.³⁰ Such was its importance that the trade was subject to much regulatory legislation, often influenced by the strong lobbying activity of affected companies.³¹ A document compiled during investigations into Darcy's monopoly suggested that most villages in the realm had at least one leather worker, with many towns possessing at least five.³² The leather trade was especially important in London; estimates suggest that by the early seventeenth century as many as 3,000 subjects were active glove makers and 3,000 more were employed as leather dressers.³³ Like so many other trades and occupations, the industry was strongly divided and subject to conflicting interests. These divisions were largely a result of the different processes involved when making leather. The industry tended to be split between the heavy leather crafts (involving such processes as tanning, currying, and shoemaking), and the lighter leather crafts, including leather dressing and glove making.³⁴

Within London, different aspects of the leather trade were organised into corporate bodies which were increasingly granted ordinances and charters of incorporation from the thirteenth century.³⁵ Particularly important were the Leathersellers' Company, who received their first royal charter in 1444.³⁶ The Leathersellers specialised in the sale of leather within the city and many members were also craftsmen, producing goods such as gloves and parchment.³⁷ The power to search for any deceitful leather within London had long belonged to the city and to groups like the

³⁰ Hunting, *Leathersellers' Company*, p. 11; R. D. Higham, 'The Social Position of Leatherworkers', in M. Kite and R. Thomson (eds.), *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials* (London and New York, 2006), p. 82.

³¹ L. A. Clarkson, 'English Economic Policy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Case of the Leather Industry', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38:98 (1965), pp. 149-62; Dean, 'Public or Private', pp. 525-48.

³² BL, Lans. MS 74/55, fo. 155r.

³³ Clarkson, 'Leather Crafts', p. 27.

³⁴ L. A. Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Economic History Review*, 13:2 (1960), pp. 246-7; Higham, 'Social Position', p. 82. For the effects of these divisions on the passing of legislation see Clarkson, 'English Economic Policy', pp. 151-2.

³⁵ Hunting, *Leathersellers' Company*, pp. 11-18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-20, 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Leathersellers. By 1398 the enrolled ordinances of the as yet unincorporated Leathersellers allowed them to appoint two to four men to oversee defaults and abuses in the trade and to present the same to the mayor and chamberlain of London.³⁸ By 1440 they were granted further powers to search for any deceits in the making of sheep, calf, or lamb leather.³⁹ These rights were confirmed in the Company's charter of 1444 and extended across the entire realm, before receiving a later confirmation with the granting of a new charter in Elizabeth's reign.⁴⁰ Elizabeth's decision to grant a monopoly for the search and seal of leather might therefore seem surprising, this being a right which clearly belonged to the Leathersellers. Yet by the 1590s it would be claimed that the same had lapsed via non usage; a report produced by Attorney General Sir John Popham and Solicitor General Sir Thomas Egerton in May 1592 argued that this made Darcy's patent perfectly legal.⁴¹

Another important body who would rear their heads in this campaign were the Skinners' Company, an ancient corporation which had received their charter in 1327.⁴² The Skinners primarily specialised in the manufacturing and retail of furs from skins. Their charter established regulations for the expected size of fur linings and for the qualities of skin to be used for making the same, providing them with powers to search for deceitful wares and counterfeited skins within London and the suburbs.⁴³ As a corporation who relied heavily on raw skins, developments and changes in the wider leather industry were likely to capture their attention.

As suggested, the extent of the leather trade was such that a variety of different interests and leather workers were existent in the city. As was common in many livery companies, internal conflicts were present within the Leathersellers' Company, which consisted of a variety of merchant and craft interests.⁴⁴ In 1497 the whittawyers had joined the company's ranks and in

³⁸ Black, *History*, p. 20; Hunting, *Leathersellers' Company*, pp. 18-19.

³⁹ Black, *History*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-8, 49.

⁴¹ BL, Lans. MS 71/66, fo. 168r.

⁴² W. Herbert, *History of the Worshipful Company of Skinners of London, Principally Compiled from their own Record* (London, 1837), p. 299.

⁴³ E. M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (London Record Society; London, 2003), ch. 6, BHO <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol38/pp101-132> (29 Apr. 2022).

⁴⁴ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 100.

1502 the glovers followed suit.⁴⁵ By the late sixteenth century the company thus contained many different interests including merchants, fellmongers, leather dressers, glovers, and pointmakers.⁴⁶ Whilst Hunting has argued that this amalgamation of interests helped to solve potential areas for conflict between rival companies in the city, it must also be seen as increasing the potential for internal company tensions.⁴⁷ The development of a strong merchant element in the Company led to friction with some of the craftsmen. Particularly contested was the relationship between glovers and the larger company: Ralph Waggett describes this as particularly ‘chequered.’⁴⁸ Despite being united as one corporate body in London, by the early seventeenth century the glovers sought their own separate incorporation, resenting the stranglehold on leather supplies exercised by their fellow leather sellers in the Company fold.⁴⁹ The Darcy episode would see these fissures open as different parts of the trade took different stands on this controversial patent, each claiming to be the authoritative voice on the state of the industry.

Finally, it is important to note that Darcy’s patent was not the first to be introduced over the leather industry. In 1575 a patent had been granted to the courtier Sir Edward Dyer, providing him with the rights to enforce the provisions of the important regulatory Leather Act of 1563.⁵⁰ Dyer was able to secure financial benefits from the same, providing tanners and curriers who sought to evade the statute’s regulations with licences to do so. The patent expired in 1596 but was not renewed on account of the widespread abuses in leather making the licences had occasioned.⁵¹ Even this large and profitable patent was small pickings in comparison to Darcy’s later all-encompassing monopoly. The uproar and anxiety Darcy’s grant provoked from 1592-1596 undoubtedly contributed to the Crown’s decision to allow Dyer’s grant to lapse into obscurity, reluctant to meddle further in the all-important leather industry.

⁴⁵ Hunting, *Leathersellers’ Company*, pp. 36-7.

⁴⁶ Waggett, *Glovers’ Company*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Hunting, *Leathersellers’ Company*, p. 38.

⁴⁸ Waggett, *Glovers’ Company*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁰ Clarkson, ‘English Economic policy’, pp. 154-5.

⁵¹ Higham, ‘Social Position’, p. 83.

In 1592 the courtier and groom of the Queen's Privy Chamber Sir Edward Darcy sent Elizabeth a petition, requesting a patent which would bestow him with monopoly controls over the leather trade. Darcy had much political experience; not only did he hold an official position in court, but in 1583 he had been entrusted to represent the realm on a diplomatic mission to the Netherlands.⁵² Whilst he may certainly have had political experience, his relative lack of understanding or indeed of any prior participation in the leather trade is representative of the descent into the scandalous phase of patent policy.⁵³ To justify his request, Darcy constructed a strong argument based around the necessity for a reformation of the leather industry, whilst building an alliance with certain participants in the trade to provide his proposals with legitimacy. Within his petition, Darcy described the 'greate abuses nowe generallie practised in the deceitfull dressinge, sale, and vtteringe of all lether.'⁵⁴ This he complained was caused in part by the lack of statute to reform abuses in leather working and leather dressing. Darcy complained of the widespread selling of counterfeit leather goods which were 'deceitfully vttered' and deceitfully dressed, before being sold as higher quality types of leather.⁵⁵ As such, the skins of various animals were sold as other types of skins 'to the greate wronge, and hynderance of the buyer.'⁵⁶

There was likely some truth to these allegations. Dyer's patent had led to the granting of licences allowing tanners to evade regulations, thus contributing to the widespread making of unlawful leather in the realm. Complaints of abuses and the sale of counterfeit leather had been

⁵² R. Virgoe, 'Darcy, Edward (1543-1612), of Dartford Place, Kent', in P. W. Hasler (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603* (London, 1981), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/darcy-edward-1543-1612> (1 Jan. 2020).

⁵³ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ BL, Lans. MS 74/40, fo. 114r.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

articulated to authority prior to this point.⁵⁷ Poorer-quality leathers had been sold for more expensive types. A document in Burghley's papers described the 'monstrouse gayne of the Leatherseller' who frequently sold 'deceyfull ware for good', including for example leather made from sheep skins to shoemakers under the pretence that this was higher quality Spanish leather.⁵⁸ It also complained of the false dressing of leather which further served to decrease its value. Another document in Burghley's papers lamented that whilst leather was to be dressed in 'Trayne oyle', the counterfeit dressing of it had regularly seen skins dressed 'in allam.'⁵⁹

With the eagle-eye of an unscrupulous courtier, Darcy saw in these problems an opportunity, as his chance to gain a monopoly over a widespread trade in need of stronger regulation. He thus presented his project as the only chance of reforming these abuses; 'there is not redresse to be had', he claimed, 'vnlesse her Ma[jes]tie shall grante authoritie to some person for the sealinge, and searching of the said lether.'⁶⁰ He thus urged Elizabeth to 'graunt me authoritie' by her '[ett]res patents' for the search and sealing of leather for twenty years, reminding Elizabeth that the same had been granted 'in like cases.'⁶¹

Darcy's appeal was ultimately successful; by January 1592 his patent was granted. It allowed him to search and seal leather throughout the realm for a period of twenty-one years.⁶² This was intended to check abuses in both the sale and dressing of leathers. This included types of leather which had previously been free of such quality-control checks. Heretofore, only shoe leather had been required to be searched by parliamentary statute.⁶³ Darcy was also given powers to inspect the dressing of foreign skins as so many were 'counterfeitly dressed'.⁶⁴ He was authorised to conduct searches in places and at times he appointed, including at fairs, markets, and in cities.

⁵⁷ Archer, 'London Lobbies', p. 31. For one such petition by shoemakers in Devon in 1576, see BL, Lans. MS 22/37, fo. 102.

⁵⁸ BL, Lans. MS 74/45, fo. 127v.

⁵⁹ BL, Lans. MS 74/53, fo. 157v.

⁶⁰ BL, Lans. MS 74/40, fo. 114r.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Archer, 'London Lobbies', p. 31; *CPR 34 Eliz*, no. 279, p. 45.

⁶³ BL, Lans. MS 74/53, fo. 157r.

⁶⁴ *CPR 34 Eliz*, no. 279, p. 45.

His reasons for requesting the grant are not hard to find; the power to issue fees for the seal meant Darcy was able to gain financially. He was able to order all who worked in leather to enter bonds of £40 agreeing not to sell or work with any unsealed leather, and to imprison or restrain from their trades any who violated these.⁶⁵ His patent also provided him with the powers to commit to 'goal' all offenders 'until they enter into a sufficient bond.'⁶⁶ Workers in the industry were thus deprived of their previous freedoms in leather markets and forced to pay new fees for the sealing of their goods. Leather could not be sold until it was sealed; artisans including sadlers and girdlers could thus not buy the leather necessary to produce their wares until it had received Darcy's seal.⁶⁷ Customs officers were ordered to ensure that no leather goods without seals be exported, and local mayors, sheriffs, and constables were ordered to assist Darcy in the enforcement of his grant.⁶⁸ The patent did contain a proviso noting the possibility of its later cancellation if it was found to be grievous to the commonwealth on review by the Privy Council, a point which petitioners would cite frequently in their efforts to have the patent overturned.

The divisions and pre-existing problems within the leather trade and the conflicts within the Leathersellers' own ranks provided Darcy with an opening, allowing him to find ready support for his proposals amongst disgruntled leather workers. The complicated pattern of alliances within the trade provided Darcy with an opportunity to build a coherent case for the need for his patent. Two surviving petitions addressed from glovers and leather dressers articulated support for the creation of an office to search and seal leather to rectify abuses in the trade.⁶⁹ Both petitions have been calendared and dated to 1593, yet their attempts to persuade the Council on the necessity of such an office suggests that they were written before the passing of Darcy's grant. It is likely that Darcy cultivated the support of these groups, possible given the conflict of interests within the Leathersellers' ranks. Whilst the wider company opposed the patent, many glovers in their ranks

⁶⁵ BL, Lans. MS 74/62, fo. 169r.

⁶⁶ *CPR 34 Eliz*, no. 279, p. 45.

⁶⁷ BL, Lans. MS 74/59, fo. 162r.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ BL, Lans. MS 74/50, fos. 142r-143r; BL, Lans. MS 74/60, fo. 164r.

and leather dressers within the city actively supported it, hoping that it would allow them better supplies of good quality leathers needed to produce their goods.⁷⁰ The charges to be paid for the office of a new searcher and sealer were regarded as a price worth paying to rectify prevalent abuses in the trade. An alliance with this well-connected courtier may even have been regarded as the best possible means to break the Leathersellers' monopoly of the trade in the city, and indeed, an early attempt by the glovers to achieve their own separate incorporation.⁷¹ By 1619 glovers would be openly agitating for their own incorporation and proved willing to join with the courtier Lady Killigrew to secure this in the 1630s.⁷² In return for her support, Killigrew was to be provided with a patent similar to that awarded to Darcy, allowing her the power to appoint a searcher and sealer for leather and to receive all fees.⁷³ The glovers' support for Darcy in the 1590s provides an early example of the willingness of groups with specific commercial interests to join with a courtier, as tensions within the Leathersellers' Company reached breaking-point. It is possible that these glovers regarded Darcy as a powerful patron, who might prove able to secure their separate incorporation.

The glovers' petition was addressed to the Privy Council by those practicing the trade who claimed to live 'w[i]thin 40 myles compas about London.'⁷⁴ Many glovers in the wider company lived in areas such as Lambeth and Bermondsey and it is likely that this petition was signed by some residing outside of the city walls.⁷⁵ In form, the petition was unsigned and unmarked, and written on one sheet of parchment in secretary script. It was common for many anti-monopoly petitions to be unsigned and to take a variety of forms; signatures did not seem to be a necessary way to bolster the credibility and authenticity of such appeals. Little evidence survives of the particulars through which this petition was constructed, but it is likely that disaffected glovers from within and

⁷⁰ Waggett, *Glovers' Company*, p. 13; Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, p. 142.

⁷¹ Such alliances would become common, see Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 165-6; Unwin, *Gilds*, pp. 294-7.

⁷² Waggett, *Glovers' Company*, chs. 4-5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷⁴ BL, Lans. MS 74/50, fo. 142r.

⁷⁵ Waggett, *Glovers' Company*, p. 15.

from outside the Leathersellers' ranks came together to produce this document. As it attacked the leather sellers within the same, it was produced without official company sponsorship, attesting to the ability for these glovers to come together independently of the company to petition, likely drawing on their joint funds to finance the suit.

Their petition began with a brief opening address as the glovers requested the Council's help to reform the 'miserable estate of vs the generall multitude of Glouers and other Cutters of Lether', who they claimed were 'many thowsands' in number.⁷⁶ The petition included numerous demands calling for problems in the leather trade to be reformed. It read primarily as a concerted attack on the activities of the Leathersellers' Company. Their petition lamented two main issues: the engrossment of leather supplies by these (alleged) greedy and unscrupulous merchants, and the decline in the quality of leather consequently put to sale. The glovers complained that 'the Lethersellers of London do Ingrose continewally into the hands all sorts of Lethe^r', purchasing 'all the Lethe^r & skinns they may gett for monye.'⁷⁷ Here the glovers played on perceptions of the moral economy; implicit in the description of these merchants as engrossers was the suggestion that they worked for their own private benefit, raising prices and gaining wealth at the expense of the larger realm. As well as engrossing products, their second complaint argued that these leather sellers continuously mixed their packs of leather with deceitful goods causing the 'discredtytt & vndoing' of the glovers who found that 'the ware we sell is wrought of much bad stuffe when we pay for good.'⁷⁸ They thus called on the Council to consider the leather sellers' 'excessive gayne by Ingrosing' and their 'vnreasonable gayne in false packing', which they described as both 'Infinitt and intollerable.'⁷⁹

The petitioners also complained of the monopolisation of leather markets and the dominance of London as the main market to purchase leather. The glovers claimed to be

⁷⁶ BL, Lans. MS 74/50, fo. 143r.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

'constrayned' to travel as far as forty miles to purchase their supplies, when they could purchase better leather 'at home in the Cuntry, at a far more reasonable rate.'⁸⁰ They suggested that all producers of leather be made to bring their leather to Leadenhall, the chief leather market in London, to allow the glovers to purchase the best quality of leather for themselves, cutting out the need for the leather seller as a middleman. In effect, they wished to break the Leathersellers' dominance of the London leather trade. The glovers ended their complaint by suggesting the need for the appointment of a searcher to seal all goods, to ensure their quality and just price. They recognised the need to pay a 'small fee for the searcher' but suggested that such a course of action would undoubtedly ensure that 'ouf trade would sone growe better in short tyme', with prices for leather brought down from their current high rate of 50 shillings a dozen to as little as 16-20 shillings.⁸¹ The glovers were in effect requesting the creation of the very same office Darcy would receive, testament to a likely collusion between Darcy and this important section of the leather trade. The glovers as a group were clearly receptive to the creation of such an office; by 1638 they would once again petition the Crown for the creation of an officer to search and seal leather.⁸² Yet at this later date, they requested this power to search be given to themselves as a newly incorporated body. In 1592 they were clearly prepared to join with Darcy to achieve the same.

The glovers were not the only group agitating for reforms in the trade; a petition was also sent to the Council by leather dressers based in London, Surrey, and Middlesex.⁸³ Their petition was similar to the glovers' suit in form, with no numbered demands or signatures. The complaints they articulated were also focused on the abuses in the trade caused by the engrossment of leather by the leather sellers, and their continual selling of 'false' skins and wares. This is again suggestive of a likely collaboration between Darcy, leather dressers, and glovers, all intent on articulating the same concerns to Elizabeth and the Council to push for the creation of this new office. The leather

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² 'A breviat or statement of the case of the glovers', Mar. 1638, TNA, SP 16/383, fos. 164-165. They would even reference Darcy's patent in this breviat, arguing that their rates for seal were to be much cheaper.

⁸³ BL, Lans. MS 74/60, fo. 165v.

dressers thus claimed to be 'greatly wronged' by many 'who for ther owne priuat profytt, do sell greate store of bad Lether for good & thereby vndoe vs, o[u]r wiues and children.'⁸⁴ The motives for the leather dressers' decision to join this suit were also made clear. They complained that many leather sellers had turned their attentions to the leather dressing trade and do 'sett such on worke upon the same, as haue neuer serued in those trades, halfe the tyme of seaven yeares.'⁸⁵ The leather dressers thus complained that they were deprived of work as leather sellers moved to dress leather. They thus likely regarded Darcy's grant as the best means to put an end to the leather sellers' troublesome involvement in this craft, ensuring they could no longer dress and sell counterfeit leather goods. Like the glovers, they complained of the bad quality of leather, as well as the engrossing of supplies which had caused prices to rise beyond reasonable rates. Appealing to the concept of the commonwealth, they complained that through the Leathersellers' 'Ingrossing and selling lether of bad dressing for good dressing, the whole Comon Welth is greatly wronged: and we yo[u]r Ho[nours] pore supli[cants] vtterly discredited.'⁸⁶

Like the glovers, the leather dressers called for the appointment of a 'continewall v[i]ew and search.'⁸⁷ They claimed to be 'content' to pay for all necessary fees required for the same. Importantly they did not call for this searcher to be a courtier, but to be established 'among the workemen of these sorts of Lether' and were at great pains to stress that the appointment of such an officer was something which they had long since desired. They thus claimed to have 'been always of this minde, that the onely means of reforming the abuses aforesaid, might be had by sealing the good and the bad.'⁸⁸ The leather dressers' petition was therefore interesting in its attempts to present their grievances as genuine, yet the similarities between this and the supplication of the glovers adds further plausibility to the theory that these petitions were part of a larger campaign resulting from an alliance with Darcy and disaffected glovers and leather dressers

⁸⁴ Ibid., fo. 164r.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

in and around London. For the leather dressers, this alliance was surely regarded as a means to stop the encroachment of leather sellers on their specific trades.

Both sets of petitioners also demonstrated important rhetorical skills with an eye to the contextual circumstances in which they were petitioning. The 1590s were a time of acute strain, where population growth created pressures on grain resources and employment opportunities.⁸⁹ In this context, authorities became increasingly alarmed with both the threat of popular disorder and increases in poverty and vagrancy; it was these alarms which led to the development of the Poor Laws in the 1590s.⁹⁰

The petitioners played on these concerns and the fear of the presence of a growing idle poor who begged in the streets as they attempted to force the government's hand. To do so, they invoked the authorities' own rhetoric of the problem of poverty as a persuasion strategy, actively responding to widely articulated fears about the proliferation of poverty and vagrancy. The glovers thus ended their complaint not with a promise to pray for the souls of the Council, as was common in supplications, but with a firm warning: that the leather sellers would soon 'become ritcher then common Subiects.'⁹¹ The likely effects of this were laid out clearly: 'thousands of vs' would soon be 'compelled to begg in the streets w[i]th our wives & children, to the great increase of beggars, wherew[i]th the Land at this present time is most pittifully pestered.'⁹² The leather dressers similarly emphasised their position as poor beggars, suggesting that the number of idle poor would only increase if reforms were not forthcoming, and if the leather sellers continued to deprive them of their work. Problems in the leather industry were dramatically claimed as already causing the realm to be 'filled w[i]th beggars', and numerous households were 'eaten cleane out of dores, that otherwise might very well liue and mayntayne the[i]r chardge by ther trade.'⁹³ The leather sellers were accused of employing unapprenticed individuals, thus depriving their servants and children

⁸⁹ J. Sharpe, 'Social Strain and Social Dislocation, 1585-1603', in Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, p. 194.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁹¹ BL, Lans. MS 74/50, fo. 143r.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ BL, Lans. MS 74/60, fo. 164r.

who had been 'trayned vp' of work.⁹⁴ If this continued they too would be 'constrayned to begg.'⁹⁵ The implications were clear: reformation of abuses would allow more subjects to maintain themselves and prevent their recourse to the poor dole or indeed beggary and vagrancy. To soften this bleak picture of the future they had painted, the petitioners attempted to appeal to Elizabeth's need for money, by suggesting that the seal would allow subjects to 'make payment of all dewties to hir ma[jes]tie then now we are able.'⁹⁶

The glovers and leather dressers therefore articulated their wishes for reforms to the leather industry within skilful petitions. These inclusions were not merely an attempt to remind authority of its paternal obligations to help the poor, so much as a clever utilisation of contemporary concerns with poverty and vagrancy in the current climate of dearth. Both ultimately attest to a likely alliance between Darcy and those interests in the leather trade who supported the need for reform, providing an early example of the intersection between city and court as interests combined, leading to the successful granting of a particularly powerful monopoly. Darcy's request for the office of searcher and sealer was presented not as a monopoly grant, but as a genuine office desired by artisans to rectify problems in this all-important industry. By harnessing this support and by taking advantage of pre-existing divisions in the Leathersellers' Company, Darcy was able to present himself as speaking for the commonwealth.

Whilst these bodies were ultimately prepared to accept a new office for the searching and sealing of leather, the main bulk of the petitioning activity in this episode was to come from the Leathersellers' Company itself, who also used skilful and persuasive petitions for a rather different purpose: to pursue the patent's full cancellation.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

From 1592 Darcy's patent incited a torrent of opposition. The Leathersellers' account books for the year 1591-1592 record early payments for 'charg[e]s of Lawe' against Darcy's patent.⁹⁷ They moved to fight the grant with zeal. A letter from Rowe to Burghley suggests that Darcy only moved to enforce the terms of his patent from January 1593, perhaps in the face of this legal opposition.⁹⁸ Agitation against the grant thus escalated between January and March 1593; a constant stream of correspondence between Rowe and Burghley highlights not only the city's rejection of the patent, but their worries of the existence of a larger popular opposition to it.⁹⁹

On 30 January, Rowe informed Burghley that the aldermen and Common Council had decided that 'the sayed search & allowance of leather' was 'allready comprised w[i]th in the Charter granted to this Citie', and more particularly, that the patent was 'much preudiciall' and 'directlie impugnant to the Patent & priviledges granted to the Felowship of Leathersellers.'¹⁰⁰ The rights to search and seal leather had long belonged to the city and company. Rowe had thus asked Darcy's permission to stay the publication of the patent for at least seven nights to allow time for lawyers to consult their charter and privileges. Darcy's enthusiasm to see the terms of his patent enforced led him to be impatient and to dismiss these concerns, informing Rowe of his wish to publish the text of his patent the very same day. Rowe thus appealed to Burghley as a 'good father to this Comon weal', calling on him to intercede with the Queen to cancel the patent.¹⁰¹ He ended the letter by expressing his concern that this patent would be unpopular not only within the confines of London, but 'through the whole Realm.'¹⁰²

The city authorities moved to present their own supplication to the Council, bemoaning the effects of this new monopoly grant. Rowe once again wrote to Burghley on 3 February, noting that the aldermen had 'thought good to make o[u]' complaint & set down certin reasons conteining

⁹⁷ London, Leathersellers' Company Archive, Liber Curtes, Accounts and Inventories, 1584-1647, ACC 1/2, fos. 45r, 47v, 49v-50r.

⁹⁸ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/001, fos. 323v-324v.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, fos. 321v, 328v-329r, 329v-330r, 331v, 333r, 334r-335r, 335.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, fos. 323v-324v.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, fo. 324v.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, fo. 324r.

the inconveniences that might grow there by.¹⁰³ The aim of the petition was to persuade Elizabeth to take 'farther advise' from her council, with the ultimate goal being to achieve the revocation of the patent.¹⁰⁴ By 25 February, Rowe appealed to the Council once more, this time forwarding a collective petition sent from various London based companies, chiefly the 'Leathersellers & other poor Companies that trade w[i]th in this Citie.'¹⁰⁵ Rowe explained that Darcy's recent attempts to enforce his patent had worried the 'porer sort' of these companies, who feared that it would 'vtterlie overthrow them and their trades.'¹⁰⁶ The letter provides evidence that some subjects were even prepared to present their petition to the Council in person, regarding this as a more suitable (and perhaps forceful) way of articulating their discontent than following acceptable petitioning channels. Rowe expressed his concern that these 'multitudes' had planned 'to repair to the Court' with their petition, forcing him to exhort them to remain in a state of 'quietnes & obedience.'¹⁰⁷ By including this statement, Rowe was of course playing on a pre-existing concern with clamorous petitioning activity. By suggesting that subjects were so agitated that they had been prepared to travel to the court, Rowe included a thinly veiled threat to authority: if this petition was ignored, he might be unable to prevent similar gatherings in the future. In doing so, Rowe offered an example of subjects' ability to utilise threats and the rhetoric of disorder to force particular courses of action, in this case, the revocation of Darcy's grant.¹⁰⁸

The petition forwarded by Rowe to the Council was an impressive collective endeavour, addressed from thirteen distinct groups of traders and artisans to the lord mayor of London. Chief amongst the petitioners were members of the Leathersellers' and Skinners' Companies, but the petition was also addressed from leather dyers, purse makers, sadlers, fellmongers, and even members of the Stationers' Company.¹⁰⁹ Glovers and 'all other dressers, workers & Converters of

¹⁰³ Ibid., fo. 321v.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. The text of the petition does not survive.

¹⁰⁵ BL, Lans. MS 73/17, fo. 55r.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Walter, 'Public Transcripts', pp. 141-2.

¹⁰⁹ BL, Lans. MS 73/17, fo. 56r.

leather' were also listed as petitioners.¹¹⁰ The involvement of some glovers and leather dressers in this suit once more attests to the extent of divisions within the industry. Some artisans had clearly chosen to side with their leather selling brethren, viewing Darcy's monopoly as detrimental to their trade. Darcy's patent was not a grant which united artisan interests, but which publicly divided the industry.

The lead in this petitioning activity likely came from the Leathersellers' Company themselves whose rights to search were especially impacted by the grant. A copy of the petition was supplied to the Council by Rowe, but an extended version of the supplication with additional points can be found within the papers of Burghley, styled as a 'declaration' sent from these various artisans to Burghley himself.¹¹¹ Though it also claimed to have been written by numerous workers of leather within the realm, the petitioners described themselves chiefly as 'your Suppliaunts the Leathersellers of London.'¹¹² This extended version of the petition also contained an additional folio, rehearsing the ancient powers and privileges granted to the Leathersellers' and Skinners' Companies, suggesting that both took the lead in this petitioning endeavour.¹¹³ As noted, the Skinners' Company specialised more in the retail of furs than in leather goods, but they did maintain an interest in skins. They jealously protected their rights to search skins and to ensure that all were properly dressed. As such, they were vexed by Darcy's powers to view and search skins which were 'deceitfully wrought.'¹¹⁴ The Leathersellers' accounts record receiving a sum of £5 from the Skinners towards opposing Darcy's patent, showing that the two bodies were indeed engaging in a cross-company opposition campaign.¹¹⁵ Members of both these companies joined whilst rallying

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ BL, Lans. MS 74/44, fos. 124r-126v. Despite some differences in wording, the petition forwarded by Rowe similarly calls for the patent to be reviewed by law. It is likely that petitioners first petitioned Rowe before writing an extended version for Burghley.

¹¹² BL, Lans. MS 74/44, fo. 124v.

¹¹³ Ibid., fo. 125r.

¹¹⁴ Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, ch. 6; BL, Lans. MS 74/44, fo. 126v.

¹¹⁵ ACC 1/2, fo. 47v.

support for their supplication from other leather workers. The petition thus attests to the ability for artisans and traders from across companies to join to petition authority.

The petition was unmarked and unsigned, consisting of a brief lamentation on the effects of Darcy's new grant with an additional set of five numbered grievances. The petitioners were careful to exonerate Elizabeth from any blame in granting this odious monopoly, suggesting that Darcy had tricked Elizabeth with a narrative of 'supposed abuses' in the leather trade.¹¹⁶ In their third demand, the petitioners questioned why this office had been awarded to Darcy at all; his lack of experience in the trade would serve to 'breede infinite trouble and noe benefite to the Commonwealthe.'¹¹⁷ Petitioners here engaged with the all-important idea of the commonwealth, drawing on this discourse in the public transcript to appeal to the sentiments of their rulers. The petitioners proceeded to criticise the excessive rates imposed for the seal, likely to cause the undoing of the poor leather workers, especially as they were required to 'bringe all their leather from their shoppes and warehouses to a place in the Citie of his appointment' to receive the seal.¹¹⁸ The petitioners ended by calling for the repeal of the grant, or in a great example of the importance of the law to early modern culture, to ensure that the patent be tried 'in pointe of lawe.'¹¹⁹

The copy of the 'Declaration' existent in Burghley's papers went even further in its appeal to laws and privileges. It contained a full folio rehearsing the various patents conferred to both the Skinners' and Leathersellers' Companies by past monarchs and confirmed of late by the Queen. It thus rehearsed the rights of the Skinners to search for any deceitful skins and furs in the city and wider realm and to punish all offenders for the same. These rights had been bestowed in their charter of 1327 and confirmed by Henry VII.¹²⁰ Whilst it is difficult to ascertain with what degree the Company had continued to exercise these privileges in the later sixteenth century, some

¹¹⁶ BL, Lans. MS 74/44, fo. 124v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Herbert, *Company of Skinners*, pp. 310-12.

evidence does suggest that the Skinners did try and maintain these rights, ordering for example the burning of numerous deceitful furs at Smithfield in 1562.¹²¹ Their willingness to defend their rights in the 'Declaration' provides further evidence of the perceived importance of these privileges, protected in the face of the intrusion of an outsider courtier. The 'Declaration' proceeded to reference the charter of the Leathersellers. The petitioners claimed that the Leathersellers

Have the search of Calves Skinnes, sheepskinnes & lambe skinnes, goat & kidd skinnes deceitfully wrought, & of all other lyke deceitfull woorks and woorkmen, touting that misterie in any part of the Realm.¹²²

Here was a strong appeal to charter culture with the petitioners stressing their own various privileges to search for deceitful skins and leathers throughout the realm. Darcy's grant was therefore challenged in this petition not only due to its practical effects on the leather industry, but in terms of its larger legality and infringement on pre-existing patents and charters. Petitioners were in effect comparing the antiquity of their own prerogative-given powers with Darcy's more recent prerogative grant. This of course may raise questions of authorship, and of the influence of legal counsel in this petitioning endeavour. As a petition sent from company members, the Leathersellers' or Skinners' own legal counsel likely played a part in its construction. The payment received from the Skinners may have been to fund this petition.

The 'Declaration' and complaints of the city of London did not fall on deaf ears. On 18 March, the Privy Council wrote to Lord Buckhurst, Sir John Fortescue, Sir John Wolley, and two prominent aldermen, Henry Billingsley and Nicholas Mosley.¹²³ They noted the activity of 'divers leather dressers and leathersellers in the cittie of London' who had 'procured multitudes of people to complaine in clamorous sorte of the inconveniences' of Darcy's patent.¹²⁴ Rowe's suggestions that opposition might be widespread and that multitudes of subjects had planned to petition the

¹²¹ Veale, *English Fur Trade*, ch. 9.

¹²² BL, Lans. MS 74/44, fo. 125r.

¹²³ APC, 24, p. 123.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

court had clearly worried the Council, causing them to express concern that subjects were acting in a clamorous fashion. In response, and likely due to the demands in the 'Declaration', the Council ordered these officials to conduct an inquiry into the validity and effects of Darcy's grant. They were given power to summon the leather dressers and leather sellers in the capital, and required to examine all complaints exhibited against the grant.¹²⁵ Continued correspondence between Rowe and Burghley in March also suggests that Attorney General Sir Thomas Egerton and Solicitor General Sir Edward Coke had been charged with the task of considering the legality of the patent together with the city Remembrancer Giles Fletcher.¹²⁶ Almost immediately therefore the Council had taken decisive action to review Darcy's grant, action which was triggered by petitioning opposition.

The appointment of this commission was embraced with enthusiasm by disaffected leather sellers and leather workers, who responded by sending yet another petition to persuade councillors of the need to revoke Darcy's patent. Titled as the 'humble petition of Artificers and Vendors of Leather', the supplication was addressed specifically to Buckhurst, Wooley, and Fortescue.¹²⁷ Whilst undated, it was likely written after the appointment of the commission on 18 March 1593 but before the 17 May when Darcy responded to its contents with a point-by-point rebuttal.¹²⁸ Like the 'Declaration' of February, the petition was also written by various artisanal groups involved in the 'dressinge, workinge, makinge, vtteringe and selling of leather', all who claimed to be 'grieved by reason of M^r Edward Darcy his graunte.'¹²⁹ The involvement of some leather dressers in this suit again attests to the divisions created by this monopoly in the wider industry. The petition did not claim to have been presented officially by the Leathersellers' Company, but as its participants included leather sellers, it is likely that some were company members. Once again, this attests to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/001, fos. 331v, 333r, 335r-v. These letters make clear that the city wanted this conference to be delayed due to the absence of the recorder in the countryside.

¹²⁷ BL, Lans. MS 74/48, fos. 136v-137r.

¹²⁸ BL, Lans. MS 74/51, fo. 146r.

¹²⁹ BL, Lans. MS 74/48, fo. 137r.

the ability for subjects from across the leather trade to join collectively for the sole purpose of petitioning authority.

The 'Humble Petition' was a sophisticated document, highlighting the ability of petitioners to utilise unique and efficient forms to bolster the legitimacy of their arguments and requests. The petition was large, stretching over two folios.¹³⁰ It used a well-organised format consisting of two sections, one offering five points detailing the 'some and efecte' of Darcy's patent and the second section consisting of seven numbered points and considerations 'wherewithe we finde our selues grieved'.¹³¹ This form allowed the petitioners to show their detailed knowledge of the patent, before presenting their grievances against it as emerging from an informed analysis of its provisions and effects. The first point of the petition read as a short and well-structured summary of their overall complaint, defending the leather trade and arguing against the need for its major reformation, and referring directly to the 'preamble' of Darcy's patent and the way his monopoly had been justified. Its form was certainly unique; this was not a formulaic supplication, but a document crafted in specific circumstances, intended to ensure the cancellation of the grant 'according to the proviso conteyned in the same.'¹³²

The demands and points contained within focused especially on the practical effects Darcy's grant had on the industry, mirroring the 'Declaration' in much of its contents. After noting the changes wrought in the industry by the patent, including providing a detailed list of the rates imposed by Darcy for sealing, they proceeded to focus on the effects of the same. The petitioners' fifth demand thus criticised the 'intollerable taxes' imposed for the seal, drawing on the notion of the evils of prioritising private gains over the public good by suggesting that this had caused the 'vtter vndoinge of manie Thosands Hir Ma[jes]t[ie]'s poore and duetifull Subiects.'¹³³ By contrast, Darcy allegedly made profits of as much as £1000 per year. The petitioners also criticised the need

¹³⁰ Ibid., fos. 136v-137r.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., fo. 137r.

for sellers to travel to markets to have their leather sealed as well as the requirement that all subjects enter bonds agreeing not to sell any unsealed leather. They also challenged the whole basis of Darcy's grant, claiming to 'vtterlie denie that there is anie vnlawfull, Counterfeicte, or deceitfull Dressinge' of any leather in the realm, rendering the need for a searcher and sealer non-existent.¹³⁴

Much like the earlier 'Declaration', the 'Humble Petition' went further than offering a brief lamentation of the effects of Darcy's patent. The petitioners engaged with important notions in both economic and political thought, drawing on the issues of the commonwealth, law, and liberty to express their specific grievances to these councillors within larger frameworks designed to appeal to authority. The issues of poverty and vagrancy were again addressed by subjects when describing the practical effects of Darcy's grant. The petitioners were keen to suggest that it affected more than just a few subjects, calling on the councillors to 'consider of the multitude of the p[er]sons whome the saide graunte toucheth or Concerneth', a number they suggested was akin to the number of parishes in the realm.¹³⁵ They suggested that a torrent of subjects maintained 'there wives children seruaunts and families' through the leather trade; the patent would therefore cause the undoing of thousands.¹³⁶ Their first demand described the growth of the industry in recent years, occasioned especially by increases in overseas trade, with merchants importing more leather to be dressed and worked by the realm's subjects. As such, they claimed, 'a greater number of hir Ma[jes]t[ie]'s poore Subiects with their families are sett on worke, and maineteined' by the trade than had been in previous years.¹³⁷ To force so many out of the industry via these new restraints would therefore be risky. Given the current presence of dearth, inflation, and scarcity in the realm, these subjects were 'already scarcelie able to lyve, by all their industries and indevors.'¹³⁸ The petitioners here shaped their rhetoric to appeal to prevalent concerns with vagrancy, painting

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

the leather industry as a crucial source of employment in the realm. In doing so, petitioners also played on ideas in the public transcript pertaining to the responsibilities and paternalism expected of their superiors, actively using these ideas to force the government's hand to revoke the patent.¹³⁹

Amidst its concern with the practical effects on the leather industry, the 'Humble Petition' also reads as a strong appeal to law, questioning the overall legality of this specific patent by engaging with discourses current in the religious and parliamentary spheres. The petitioners' second grievance complained that the types of leather searched by Darcy had not been warranted to be viewed by any 'Acte of p[ar]liament nor Lawe', thus questioning how the courtier, who surely knew that the Queen 'ruleth Hir Subjects onelie by the lawes of the Realm' could attempt to exercise the same.¹⁴⁰ Petitioners here went beyond claims made in the 'Declaration' that Darcy's patent was invalid as it conflicted with the patents of the Skinners' and Leathersellers' Companies. Instead, they claimed that this aspect of Darcy's patent had no sound basis in the law, strongly suggesting that patents needed to be scrutinised by parliament. They also expressed their concern that the requirement that all local and customs officials help to enforce his patent was contrary to the 'rule of lawe.'¹⁴¹ Crucially, their fifth demand also challenged the legality of the high rates imposed for the seal by presenting this as a form of non-parliamentary taxation. They questioned 'whether the same tax be meete necessarie or Convenient to be laide uppon the people, not beinge graunted by p[ar]liament nor warrantable by Lawe.'¹⁴² Here, the petitioners engaged with concerns that subjects were not to be taxed without parliamentary consent.¹⁴³ This was highly significant. For the first time, petitioners appear to have explicitly articulated their absolute rights to property and the principle that taxation required consent in an anti-monopoly petition sent directly to councillors.

¹³⁹ Braddick and Walter, 'Grids of Power', p. 34.

¹⁴⁰ BL, Lans. MS 74/48, fo. 137r.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, p. 134.

The petitioners also made references to the individual liberties and freedoms held by all freeborn Englishmen. Using the language of serfdom, they expressed their concern with the 'bondage' subjects would be brought into if forced to take their wares to specific towns as designated at Darcy's pleasure, and if made to enter bonds not to deal in any unsealed leather.¹⁴⁴ The end of their petition expressed their concerns on this point most notably. The petitioners presented themselves as merely seeking to 'live by their lawfull trades and laboures', and they requested to be allowed to 'enioye the benefite' of the realm's laws, without being 'compelled to paie nor yelde to anie suche bondage.'¹⁴⁵ The language of bondage so present in this petition mirrored arguments concerning the rights of subject to exercise their God-given trades and labours, and their common law rights to property, so prevalent in the parliamentary and religious spheres.¹⁴⁶ These arguments were reminiscent of themes occurring in the debate surrounding High Commission, celebrating and defending the common law in the face of encroachments by the royal prerogative. The 'Humble Petition' saw subjects utilise discourses and themes from the high political sphere as rhetorical strategies in petitions centred around their economic interests. The petitioners ended by calling on the councillors to ensure that the patent be made void according to the proviso allowing its cancellation, or alternatively, that they as subjects be 'left to the Comon lawes of the Realme to trie their liberties.'¹⁴⁷

This strong inclusion of appeals to the law may, like the earlier 'Declaration', cause us to question the precise involvement and role of legal counsel in the construction of this petition. Indeed, many of the sentiments and arguments employed in the 'Humble Petition' may be seen as bearing the influence of the important Puritan lawyer Nicholas Fuller. Fuller was especially active in the 1590s in both the campaigns against High Commission and the oath *ex officio*, and as a source

¹⁴⁴ BL, Lans. MS 74/48, fo. 137r.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., fos. 136v-137r.

¹⁴⁶ Sacks, 'Countervailing of Benefits', pp. 275-7.

¹⁴⁷ BL, Lans. MS 74/48, fos. 136v-137r.

of legal counsel for many companies in their battles against monopolies.¹⁴⁸ In his concerns with both, Fuller engaged with the same notions of liberty and prerogative. His active role in anti-monopoly campaigns can be traced in the accounts of the Brewers' Company in their protests against Sir Richard Drake's monopoly for the production of beer and ale. From April 1594 he can be identified in accounts as the Company's official legal counsel.¹⁴⁹ Not only did Fuller offer the Brewers' legal advice, but he also helped them to produce anti-monopoly supplications, receiving payments for the same in July 1594.¹⁵⁰ The references to the rule of law, bondage, and the common law found in both the 'Humble Petition' and the 'Declaration' might suggest the involvement of a lawyer in the construction of these petitions. Evidence from the Leathersellers' own account books suggest that Fuller was employed by the Company as a lawyer from 1594 and his influence can be traced in the second stage of the petitioning campaign. It is therefore not beyond the realm of possibility that Fuller also helped these subjects produce their supplications in 1593, though specific payments for this petition cannot be located in the Company account books for these years; legal counsel and scribes may have been funded by these various leather workers *outside* of the auspices of company organisation.

On the other hand, to cede to Fuller the responsibility for the political language of these petitions would be to undermine the sophistication of the leather worker's own views. As Christopher Brooks has shown, the 'language of liberty' resonated widely.¹⁵¹ England was a highly litigious society by the 1590s, with a growth in the number of subjects using the law.¹⁵² Freemen were strongly aware of their own rights and customs, and indeed those of the company of which they belonged.¹⁵³ Whilst more specific references to past statutes may have been inclusions by

¹⁴⁸ Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society*, p. 116; S. Wright, 'Nicholas Fuller and the Liberties of the Subject', *Parliamentary History*, 25:2 (2006), p. 178; Dean, 'Public or Private', p. 538; R. G. Usher, 'Nicholas Fuller: A Forgotten Exponent of English Liberty', *American Historical Review*, 12:4 (July, 1907), pp. 745-52.

¹⁴⁹ GL, CLC/L/BF/B/001/MS05445/009.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society*, p. 423.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 61-3.

¹⁵³ Archer, 'Popular Politics', p. 36.

lawyers, larger arguments pertaining to the rights to one's labour, and more generalised appeals to the issue of commonwealth, were likely articulated by these disgruntled leather workers themselves. The 'Humble Petition' should therefore not be categorised as a supplication written entirely by legal counsel but regarded as a genuine collective petitioning document produced by leather sellers and artisans *with* the assistance of legal counsel. The lack of reference to it in the Leathersellers' account books suggest that any lawyers used were funded independently of the larger company.

By contrast, a third and final petition written against Darcy's patent in 1593 provides more concrete evidence of the influence of Fuller. On 23 July, a supplication was addressed to Burghley from a group of imprisoned leather sellers.¹⁵⁴ Their petition was titled as a list of 'reasons and resoluc[i]ons' as to why they would 'not yeilde to M^r Darcy' as requested by Sir Richard Martin and Sir John Harte.¹⁵⁵ Clearly the city had implored the four recalcitrants to cease their resistance, or else face continued imprisonment. Far from acquiescing to these demands, they joined to produce a forceful petition stating their case for active resistance. The supplicants identified themselves as 'John Warde, Arthur Parkins, Anthony Quaplad & Richard Ironside leathersellers.'¹⁵⁶ The records of the Leathersellers' Company can be used positively to identify two of these men, Richard Ironside and John Warde, as leading members of the Company.¹⁵⁷ Warde served as a warden between 1592-93. Ironside was to become a prominent member of the Company, serving as a fourth warden in 1602-3, before being elected to the court of assistants in 1604. In 1587 he was described in accounts as a 'yeoman', and was actively involved in the leather trade, employing four apprentices. No surviving references can be found to ascertain the identities of Quapland or Parkins, though joining as they were in this complaint with prominent company members, it is likely that they too were freemen of the Company.

¹⁵⁴ BL, Lans. MS 74/42, fos. 118r-119v.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 118r.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ I would like to thank Jerome Farrell, former archivist at the Leathersellers' Company, for providing me with this and the following information on these individuals.

The 'Reasons and Resolutions' was a highly technical supplication, full of references to the royal prerogative and highly influenced by religious rhetoric. Archer has argued that the petition included 'a clever mix of appeals to law, history and the commonweal'.¹⁵⁸ The petition reads as a legal appeal against Darcy's patent crafted around the larger contextual issues of prerogative and the common law. It is here that the influence of Fuller is most obviously apparent; as these four petitioners were imprisoned, the Leathersellers likely employed legal counsel to petition on their behalf, especially given the prominence of Warde and Ironside as active members.

The first demand of the petition dealt explicitly with the topic of the royal prerogative. The petitioners began by stressing that their intention in resisting Darcy had been 'farre from comittinge anye contempt against hir Ma[jes]^{ties} prerogatyve Royall.'¹⁵⁹ However, they proceeded to celebrate the common law as one of the most important features of the constitution, presenting it as

The chieffeste inheritance ev[er]ye meane Subiecte is borne vnto, And the sureste Anchore holde by w[hi]^{ch} the greateste Subiecte in the Realme doth enioye all he hath.¹⁶⁰

Here then was a clear articulation of subjects' liberties and the importance of the law for safeguarding property. Petitioners articulated a similar awareness with their rights to property as found in the 'Humble Petition'. They thus proceeded to express concern that Darcy's grant demonstrated that 'neither our lives, libertyes, or goodes were worthie to be p[ro]tected' by the law.¹⁶¹ After all, these liberties had been enshrined and protected by the 'p[re]rogative Royall', and confirmed 'tyme oute of mynde' by parliamentary statute and the monarch's own great seal.¹⁶² To uphold Darcy's monopoly was akin to depriving subjects of their property, reducing them to a state of bondage.

¹⁵⁸ Archer, 'Rhetorics', p. 165.

¹⁵⁹ BL, Lans. MS 74/42, fo. 118r.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The petitioners' final demand articulated these points within a legal-religious framework, referencing the importance of oaths and the purity of one's soul; it is here that Fuller's Puritan influence is readily apparent. All freemen had taken a 'p[re]cyse oathe' promising to be obedient upholders of the 'fraunchises and customes' of the city, privileges which had been enjoyed by Londoners for over 300 years.¹⁶³ The petitioners thus called on the Council's help to ensure that they did not 'runne headlonge into the horrible sinne of wilfull p[er]iurye' by adhering to Darcy's patent, a thing prejudicial to the rights and liberties of the city.¹⁶⁴ The petitioners dwelt on this point especially as they requested that the patent be reviewed 'before you or we defile our conscyenc[e]s, with the Contagius venime thereof', or 'iniure our names' with a 'p[er]petuall staine.'¹⁶⁵ This petition therefore reads as more of an appeal to the common law and the sanctity of oaths than a simple lamentation of the plight of these imprisoned leather sellers. It even included a learned reference to the Chronicles of Edward Hall. According to Hall, Henry VIII had stated that 'his mynde was neuer to aske any thinge of his comens that might sownde to his dishonour, or to the breach of his Lawes.'¹⁶⁶ By including this reference, petitioners invoked the memory of the Henrician age to suggest that Elizabeth's own father had insisted on the importance of maintaining the kingdom's laws.

The 'Reasons and Resolutions' focused less on the practical effects of Darcy's monopoly than the 'Declaration'; the role of Fuller in its construction likely accounts for its dominant focus on rights, oaths, and the common law. However, some sentiments and demands contained within suggest the influence of company members in its construction, perhaps instructing Fuller to add certain points. They attacked Darcy for seeking to increase his own 'private lucre', by articulating 'vntrue surmises' on the state of the leather trade.¹⁶⁷ They also moved to attack those leather dressers who had allied with Darcy. The patentee was supported by 'the verye woorste people of

¹⁶³ Ibid., fo. 118v.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., fo. 119v.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., fo. 118r.

Leatherdressers', whom they attacked as 'Idle drones' who merely 'seeke to feede uppon our industries.'¹⁶⁸ The petition also included an interesting piece of rumour, likely not something Fuller would have thought to include. A claim was here made that one of Darcy's deputies was even 'lyniallye discended, from a wicche, on the mother side', in a clear attempt to defame the character of his deputies.¹⁶⁹ Clearly, Darcy's monopoly had become a topic of popular discussion in the city, leading to the spread and articulation of rumours concerning the moral character of his deputies. The petitioners also lamented the increase of greedy courtiers and monopolists in the realm, claiming that such figures were 'never soe ryfe; as in this age.'¹⁷⁰

The 'Reasons and Resolutions' thus appears as a unique and sophisticated petitioning document, with a high degree of lawyerly involvement. It certainly reads as a spirited legal defence of the right of these leather sellers to resist Darcy's patent. Whilst the authors of the 'Declaration' and 'Humble Petition' likely also had help from scribes and legal counsel, perhaps outside of official company circles, it is in the 'Reasons and Resolutions' that we can see the influence of Fuller most clearly. All three petitions articulated strong arguments against Darcy's patent, which when taken together, constituted a strong petitioning campaign, involving disaffected artisans, company members, and one of the most important legal minds of the age.

The Council had therefore received numerous complaints concerning the execution of Darcy's patent, a grant which had proven to be a strong source of contention between subjects, the city, and the Crown. Crucially, the petitions produced at this stage of the petitioning campaign were not ignored but prompted responses by both Darcy and the larger Council. The strength and sophistication of the 'Humble Petition' was such that Darcy felt compelled to reply to its demands point by point in the form of a letter sent to Buckhurst and the other commissioners. Titled as 'Edward Darcie's Aunswere to the Leathersellers greeuances', the document consisted of a list of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

seven direct replies to the seven concerns expressed within the petition.¹⁷¹ Thus in response to the claim that his rates for the seal were far too high, Darcy suggested that they were appropriate, having been established upon 'the advise' of numerous leather workers.¹⁷² Defending his use of bonds, Darcy was at pains to stress that these were in no way 'hurtfull to any that meaneth to deale trewly' in leather, but merely a means to ensure that no subject be tempted to sell counterfeit wares.¹⁷³ Perhaps most interestingly, Darcy used his response to also engage with the debates concerning prerogative and common law. In his second point, Darcy answered the charge that his patent was not warranted by parliamentary statute by arguing that it derived its authority from the Queen's prerogative powers. Abuses such as those occurring in the leather trade were to be reformed 'by virtue of hir highness prerogative Royall.'¹⁷⁴ Adopting a different stance to that which would later be articulated in the 'Reasons and Resolutions', Darcy stressed the sheer importance of the prerogative to the ancient constitution; he described it as being 'as stronge as a Lawe.'¹⁷⁵

Darcy also proceeded to attack the legitimacy and authority of the petitioning campaign against him. The practice of attacking one's opponents became an important aspect of petitioning campaigns from the 1590s onwards. For example, Drake attacked the petitions produced by the Brewers' Company against his monopoly as instances of 'tedious complayninge' organised by a few dishonest subjects who prioritised their own private profits at the expense of the larger realm.¹⁷⁶ By attacking the real identity of petitioners or their conduct and behaviour, patentees were able to discredit the campaigns against them. Darcy too adopted this defensive tactic. He presented the petitioners against him as rebels, who criticised not him or his grant, but the royal prerogative itself. Darcy described the leather sellers as 'disobedient repugnens and Contemners of hir Ma[jes]^{tis} graunts'.¹⁷⁷ He questioned

¹⁷¹ BL, Lans. MS 74/51, fo. 147v.

¹⁷² Ibid., fo. 146r.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ GL, CLC/L/BF/B/001/MS05445/009.

¹⁷⁷ BL, Lans. MS 74/51, fo. 146r.

How...thes[e] p[er]sons Liue in all obedience of hir Ma[jes]^{tis} Lawes yf they be Rebels, who would make this hir Ma[jes]^{tis} graunte Inconueniente.¹⁷⁸

By presenting these subjects as ‘rebels’ Darcy also played on the Council’s fear of the many-headed monster, suggesting that they posed a threat of future disorder if they declared Elizabeth’s own laws as unreasonable.¹⁷⁹ Their decision to appeal to the common law against the patent was presented not as an attack against Darcy, but as threatening to the Crown itself. Elizabeth’s subjects, Darcy claimed, clearly sought to ‘try how far hir highnes prerogative stretceth or extendeth.’¹⁸⁰ Here then was a tactical reply by Darcy, which attempted to undermine the petition of his opponents by painting them as rebels. This was not so much because of the nature of their petitioning activity, but due to their alleged attack on a fundamental and currently contentious aspect of the English polity: the monarch’s prerogative powers.

Further documents in Burghley’s papers suggest that Darcy and his supporters continued to respond to the petitions of their opponents by painting them as the product of a dangerous and clamorous petitioning campaign. One anonymous document from 1593 listed the various ‘deceits and abuses of the Lethersellers.’¹⁸¹ Its contents suggest that it was produced by Darcy and those glovers and leather dressers who supported his grant. Its first section thus listed many of the same problems in the trade as had been articulated by the same in their earlier petitions, criticising the leather sellers for their selling of counterfeit goods, forestalling of markets, and engrossment of leather. Like Darcy’s reply to the ‘Humble Petition’, it also justified the grant on the basis of the monarch’s prerogative power to abolish all false wares from the kingdom, in order to maintain ‘the pollecie of a peacable state.’¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Walter, ‘Public Transcripts’, pp. 145, 148.

¹⁸⁰ BL, Lans. MS 74/51, fo. 146r.

¹⁸¹ BL, Lans. MS 74/47, fo. 134r.

¹⁸² Ibid.

The document also moved to criticise the leather sellers whilst engaging directly with the concept of ‘monopoly’ – providing us with our first example of the specific use of the accusation of ‘monopoly’ as the image of the odious monopolist continued to grow within political and popular culture. The writers recognised that ‘all monopolies are directly againste the Comon Welth’, but it was not Darcy who was presented as a monopoliser of the leather trade.¹⁸³ Instead this allegation was turned on its head. Through a mixture of ‘Collusion and deceate’ the Leathersellers’ Company had engrossed all leather supplies to create their own ‘Monopoli.’¹⁸⁴ They were described as ‘Catterpillers in a Comon Welth’ who were extorting the realm’s subjects.¹⁸⁵ Their petitioning activity was the main focus of the second half of this document. The writers claimed that the leather sellers

Haue mutenously incited their seruants & woorkemen as be onely vnder their Charges, as also gerdelers glo[ver]s sadlers shomakers & such Like...to make a Tumoultious proclamation, as it wer[e] in a manner of Rebellion, against the aurthoretie of Hir Ma[jes]ties graunte, w[hi]ch is proued good in Lawe.¹⁸⁶

This allegation was interesting in numerous points. By referencing the sadlers, glovers, and girdlers the writers of the document appeared to be referring directly to the ‘Declaration’ produced in February, which involved all of these groups. Yet they failed to describe this for what it was: a lawful petition of grievances. Instead, the petition was here described as a ‘proclamation’ amounting to a rebellion; once again the threat of the many-headed monster was being evoked. Similar sentiments would be expressed throughout the entirety of this document. The legitimacy of the petitioning campaign was challenged on the basis that artisan leather workers had been duped into supplicating, having been ‘blynded w[i]th an Illusion of the Letherseller.’¹⁸⁷ This served as a convenient way to explain the divisions which Darcy’s patent had caused in the industry; those

¹⁸³ Ibid., fo. 134v.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., fo. 135r.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., fo. 134v.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

glovers and dressers who complained against the grant had been manipulated by their leather selling brethren. The leather sellers were thus attacked as 'wilfull & ygnorante men', stirring up discontent through their 'vniust Clamors.'¹⁸⁸ As in Darcy's reply of 17 May, this was presented as particularly dangerous given the focus of their complaints. These leather sellers were after all direct opponents of 'hir Ma[jes]tis prerogative.'¹⁸⁹

The writers ended with a warning: to cancel such a lawful grant at the hands of contemptuous subjects would only serve to persuade others that similar patents could be revoked 'by popular & clamorous exclamacions.'¹⁹⁰ Here the Darcy camp engaged with contemporary concerns surrounding the dangers of popularity, so often associated with sedition, to present the Leathersellers as stirrers of a popular opposition campaign.¹⁹¹

The Council once again responded to these pressures. In July, a second commission was appointed to consider the validity of Darcy's patent.¹⁹² Three men were chosen as commissioners: Richard Young, Thomas Philips, and Richard Carmarthen. They were in many ways far from impartial figures. Both Young and Carmarthen were Burghley's cronies and were used frequently in his investigations into suspected Catholics in the realm.¹⁹³ All three did have a knowledge of trade as customs officials.¹⁹⁴ The impartiality of Young can be questioned. He had been granted a monopoly over starch in 1592 which the Council attempted to enforce in the face of opposition by the London Grocers' Company.¹⁹⁵ As a fellow monopolist, it is unlikely that Young would have had a sympathetic ear to the plight of disgruntled leather sellers.

The Council produced a set of articles concentrating on numerous issues in need of further investigation, responding directly to many of the worries and demands articulated by the leather

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., fo. 135r.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, p. 200.

¹⁹² BL, Lans. MS 74/56, fos. 156r-157v.

¹⁹³ *HMC, Hatfield House*, iv, pp. 210-211, 217, 497-500.

¹⁹⁴ Phillips is described in correspondence as being a customs collector, see BL, Lans. MS 28/33.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter two.

sellers.¹⁹⁶ The third article thus called on commissioners to examine what were to be classed as reasonable rates for the sealing of different kinds of leather, whilst the fifth article responded to concerns that subjects would be forced to travel to places appointed by Darcy to receive the seal. Commissioners were charged with investigating just how many places Darcy intended leather to be sealed.¹⁹⁷ The commissioners were also given orders to summon four leather sellers, and four leather dressers to speak on Darcy's behalf, providing further evidence of the affiliation between Darcy and some disgruntled leather dressers.¹⁹⁸

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the commissioners did find largely in favour of Darcy and his monopoly. In their report they presented themselves as thoroughly persuaded by the leather dressers' description of the abuses in the leather trade, stressing the need to prevent the engrossing and forestalling activities of the leather sellers. They even suggested that the Council issue a proclamation announcing the terms of Darcy's patent to the realm to ensure that all subjects received adequate information of the same, and to prevent the leather sellers from selling any unsealed goods. Yet whilst the commissioners noted the 'apparante necessitie' of the patent, they also suggested the need for the rates Darcy imposed to be reduced.¹⁹⁹ A separate list of appropriate rates for different types of leather had been agreed with leather dressers, many of whom signed the document with marks to demonstrate their approval.²⁰⁰ The commissioners had found that these charges were 'farre vnder the rates in M^r Darcyes patente.'²⁰¹ The document in itself is testament to the involvement of even illiterate leather dressers in the narrative of this grant, actively working with commissioners to advise on appropriate rates for Darcy's seal.

In the first stage of petitioning opposition against Darcy's patent, leather sellers and disgruntled leather workers had failed to prevent the execution of this new grant. Yet their

¹⁹⁶ BL, Lans. MS 74/56, fo. 156r.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ BL, Lans. MS 74/57, fo. 158r.

²⁰⁰ BL, Lans. MS 74/41, fos. 116r-117v.

²⁰¹ BL, Lans. MS 74/57, fo. 158r.

demands did not amount to nothing; the Council appointed two separate commissions to examine the legality and validity of the patent, consulting with the realm's artisan leather workers as it attempted to reach a decision on this issue. Whilst the commission in July ultimately found in favour of Darcy's patent, complaints had still opened the Council's eyes to the need to re-adjust the rates Darcy imposed. Whilst ultimately these petitions were unsuccessful in causing the revocation of the patent in 1593, the continued petitioning efforts of the city of London and the Leathersellers were to have even more of a profound effect in the second stage of their petitioning campaign.

From 1594 petitioning opposition against Darcy's patent would once again dominate the time and attention of city and council. Correspondence between Burghley and the city in 1594 highlights the continued rejection of, and failure to enforce, Darcy's patent by the authorities.²⁰² On 1 September 1594, Burghley complained to Lord Mayor Sir Richard Martin that Darcy's patent had continuously been 'empeached', depriving Darcy of the 'benefit thearby that hir Ma[jes]tie ment to him.'²⁰³ Burghley insisted that the city did not have any rights to search leather, whilst communicating a clear warning: the city was to 'yield' to the terms of the patent immediately or face the Queen's personal displeasure.²⁰⁴ In reply, Martin defended the city's position and insisted that their own legal counsel had determined that 'the sayed search by right of Charter apperteineth to this Citie.'²⁰⁵ In sentiments similar to those expressed in the 'Reasons and Resolutions', he stressed that the aldermen could not be expected to yield to Darcy's grant, thereby breaking the 'o[a]th' each had taken to 'maintain the good coustomes & priviledges of this Citie.'²⁰⁶ This was clearly the

²⁰² LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fos. 8r, 32r, 63r-v.

²⁰³ Ibid., fo. 8r.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., fo. 32r.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

position opponents were being called upon to adopt by the city's legal counsel. By October 1594, another hearing would be organised between the Leathersellers and the city on the one part, and Darcy on the other, as they continued to campaign against his patent.²⁰⁷

In 1595 petitions against the patent came from two particularly interesting quarters. On 23 January 1595, Lord Mayor Sir John Spencer wrote to the Council claiming that he had been delivered a petition 'from certain prisoners of the Companie of Leathersellers', incarcerated due to their continued resistance to Darcy's patent.²⁰⁸ Spencer suggested that these prisoners had complained to him of the city's failure to appeal to the Queen against their imprisonment. Excusing their audacity to criticise him as merely a product of their 'great grief & bitternes of hart', Spencer proceeded to forward this to the Council.²⁰⁹ The identity of these prisoners was not disclosed by Spencer, nor did it appear on the petition enclosed. However, by November 1595 the new Lord Mayor Sir Stephen Slaney wrote to the Council on behalf of the wives of some recently imprisoned leather sellers.²¹⁰ The identity of these later prisoners can be ascertained. By 14 December 1595 the acts of the Privy Council recorded the presence in the Marshalsea of Richard Ironside, Anthony Quapland, and Richard Parkins who had been imprisoned some time before for their 'contempt in disobeying her Majesty's graunte made to Edward Darcy.'²¹¹ Ironside and Quapland were clearly a continuous thorn in Darcy's side; both had been imprisoned in 1593 and listed as petitioners in the 'Reasons and Resolutions.' Whilst sadly we do not know for certain the identities of those prisoners petitioning earlier in January 1595, the prior imprisonment of these men in 1593 and their incarceration again by November 1595 means that it is possible that either of these stubborn men had also been imprisoned in January. If so, then the petition provides yet another example of the recourse to supplications by leading men in the Leathersellers' ranks.

²⁰⁷ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/025, fo. 299r.

²⁰⁸ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fo. 38r.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., fos. 60r-v.

²¹¹ APC, 25, pp. 106-7.

The petition forwarded by Spencer to the Council was addressed directly to the Queen. Crucially it had numerous similarities to the 'Reasons and Resolutions' of 1593. It did not contain any numbered grievances, articles, or signatures and was styled more as a narrative explanation of the prisoners' 'great griefs' caused by Darcy's grant.²¹² It is at this point that concrete evidence shows the direct involvement of Fuller in the campaign against Darcy and his official appointment as legal counsel for the city and Leathersellers' Company.²¹³ The Leathersellers' accounts list payments made in 1594 to both 'M' Whyte and M' Fuller for counsaile about o[u]r pattent at three soundry tymes', for which they were paid £3.²¹⁴ By September 1594, the Repertories of the Court of Aldermen also noted the official employment of Fuller as the 'learned Counsell' of the Leathersellers' Company, employed to deal with any 'cause betwene them or anye other p[er]son or p[er]sons.'²¹⁵ Evidence suggests that Fuller played an active role drafting and writing petitions for the same. In 1594 he was described in company accounts as writing a 'motio[n] to the court of Aldermen for the Releasing of o[u]r Brethren at that tyme in p[r]yson.'²¹⁶ This may have indeed referred to this very same petition sent by prisoners, received by the Council by January 1595. These records also provide insight into the centrality of scribes and clerks to the petitioning process. Payments were recorded in 1595 to 'M' Fullers man for drawing the petycion.'²¹⁷

Fuller was also employed as legal counsel to the city. The Repertories thus recorded in April 1594 that Fuller was one amongst many employed to confer with the Brewers and Tallowchandlers concerning Drake's patent, and later, to consider grievances surrounding a patent held by Sir Henry Nowell for the making of brushes.²¹⁸ In December 1594 a payment was made to Fuller and others to travel to court and petition the Council directly 'on the behalf of this Cittie touching her

²¹² LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fo. 39.

²¹³ Archer, 'London Lobbies', p. 34; Tyacke, 'Locating the English Revolution', p. 16.

²¹⁴ ACC 1/2, fos. 60r-v.

²¹⁵ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/025, fo. 296v.

²¹⁶ ACC 1/2, fo. 54v.

²¹⁷ Ibid., fo. 65r.

²¹⁸ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/025, fos. 201r-202v, 217r, 218r.

Ma[jes]t[ie]s patente for the search and sealing of Leather and the making of vine[g]ar.’²¹⁹ Their suit was clearly successful and the lawyers were later recorded as attending a meeting with the Council to discuss their cause.²²⁰ By January 1595, Fuller was even given a gift of £4 by the city for his frequent travel to court on behalf of the Leathersellers’ cause.²²¹ Clearly, the city were actively involved in the campaign of opposition directed against Darcy and Drake, drawing on the skills of Fuller to present written and verbal supplications before the court.

The involvement of Fuller is further suggested by an analysis of the contents of the petition of the prisoners. The supplication dealt heavily with the issue of the royal prerogative, as the prisoners presented themselves as dutiful subjects who would not dare to question this essential aspect of the ancient constitution. Whilst they noted their own ‘bouldnes’ in addressing the Queen, they presented it as their ‘duetie’ to inform her of their grievances.²²² They claimed to ‘prostrate our selves at yo[u]r highnes feet’ before proceeding to focus heavily on the privileges and powers granted to London via the Queen’s prerogative.²²³ In doing so, they presented themselves as staunch believers in the authority of the same. Their intent in challenging Darcy’s patent had not been to ‘oppose o[u]r selves against yo[u]r Ma[jes]t[ie]s Princely prerogative’, nor to ‘provoke or call into question your sovereign authoritie.’²²⁴ Instead, their protection of the prior privileges and rights of the city was a defence of the prerogative, an argument which had also been articulated in the ‘Reasons and Resolutions.’ The petitioners thus celebrated the prerogative as a ‘most holy & necessary thing’, expected to work in tandem with the common law and to ‘supply the defects of yo[u]r highnes Lawes.’²²⁵ They were even so bold as to suggest why the Queen had included a proviso in the grant allowing its cancellation if it were found to be vexatious. Surely this was proof that Elizabeth had never intended her grant ‘to extend against vs the absolute power of yo[u]r

²¹⁹ Ibid., fo. 329v.

²²⁰ Ibid., fo. 332r.

²²¹ Ibid., fo. 343v. Fuller and the city’s learned counsel continued to meet on the cause, see fos. 349v, 471r.

²²² LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fo. 39r.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Princely prerogative.²²⁶ In contrast to the 'Humble Petition' and the 'Reasons and Resolutions', the petitioners did not proceed to celebrate the position of the common law or to question the legality of Darcy's grant. Perhaps the failure of the petitions of 1593 had demonstrated that the Queen was not so receptive to such exhortations. The petition reveals the use of debates and ideas surrounding the prerogative in the economic sphere as the prisoners presented the powers bestowed on the city and Leathersellers' Company as more ancient and important than those granted to Darcy.

After celebrating and defending the prerogative, the petitioners did finally acquiesce to the need for some measures to be introduced to reform abuses in the leather trade. Likely aware of the findings of the commission appointed in July 1593, they could no longer claim that the leather trade was devoid of issues. However, they suggested that any searcher and sealer of leather was best appointed by the city and its livery companies, who desired no more than 'the publique good' of the realm.²²⁷ The prisoners' petition ended with a long exhortation on the importance of obedience. They proceeded to reference the larger problems caused by the granting of monopolies and patents in recent years. They complained that the

Late griefs of yo[u]r poor people is exceeding great touching this & other lyke Patents w[hi]ch^{ch} beeing many at this present time are supposed by them to draw wholly from the Comon wealth & privat[e] purse of yo[u]r poorer subjects the same not tending towards the relief of publike necessitie...²²⁸

The petitioners here painted the agitation against Darcy as part of a larger discontent occasioned by the widespread use of monopolies throughout the realm. Through the language of private versus public gains, they suggested the general discontent caused by the frequent bestowal of patents which brought no benefits at all to the larger commonwealth, the burden resting primarily on the poorest subjects. The petition of the prisoners was especially interesting, reading not as a

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., fo. 39v.

²²⁸ Ibid.

standard plea for release which we might expect to have been presented to the Queen. Instead, the petition focused heavily on the issue of the prerogative, as well as the myriad patents present in the realm.

Later in November, the now lord mayor Sir Stephen Slaney would also send the Council another petition concerning Darcy's patent, delivered by the wives of imprisoned leather sellers. Whilst the petition does not survive in its original or as a copy, the letter from Slaney to the Council of 6 November does provide some insight into its contents. Slaney informed the Council that he and the aldermen had been petitioned 'by the wives of the Leathersellers' in response to the imprisonment of their husbands some days before.²²⁹ These leather sellers had been incarcerated after attending the Star Chamber, presumably concerning Darcy's grant. Slaney's summary of the contents of the petition makes clear that the supplication included an articulation of grievances against Darcy's patent; it was far more than a simple appeal by distressed wives for their husbands to be released. Slaney noted that the petitioners offered a 'very Commentable complaint of great extremit[e]s offred vnto them by M^r Edward Darcy in the pursuite of his patent.'²³⁰ He thus appealed to the Council to free these prisoners 'from these contynuall molestac[i]ons', so that they could 'follow their vocations' and support their wives and children.²³¹ This source attests to the involvement of women in the petitioning opposition against Darcy's monopoly. As wives of company members, the Leathersellers' clerks or legal counsel were likely employed to help the same construct their appeals with their imprisoned husbands, although payments for this are not contained in the Leathersellers' account books.

In both cases, the forwarding of these petitions by city authorities provides important insight into the mechanisms of petitioning activity. In the case of the wives of leather sellers, Slaney undoubtedly added a degree of legitimacy and authority to their complaint whilst ensuring that it was received directly by the Council without the need for these women to attend court in person.

²²⁹ Ibid., fo. 60r.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid., fo. 60v.

Spencer's recommendation of the complaint of the prisoners in January served a similar purpose. The sending of complaints *through* the city seems to have become an established means through which London's artisans and companies presented their anti-monopoly petitions to central authorities.²³² In the case of Darcy, the city had clearly joined forces with the Leathersellers' Company to oppose the patent, forwarding these supplications and actively petitioning and pleading with the Council against the same.

To ensure that the petition of the prisoners would not be ignored, Spencer drew on the language of disorder and rebellion to stress the urgency of the case. Adopting tactics similar to those used by Rowe in 1593, Spencer stressed the threat of disorder occasioned by the grant, painting a picture of a city rife with tensions. As Walter and Archer argue, it was possible for local authorities to make use of the language of disorder when calling for the redress of grievances.²³³ Spencer's forwarding of these petitions provides a strong example of the use of the language of the many-headed monster to trigger action. Spencer thus referred to the 'grief & murmure of the people throughout this whole land', playing on common descriptions of the discontents of the poor as a murmur or a rabble.²³⁴ Much like the prisoners, he suggested that this was caused by the general granting of patents and monopolies throughout the land, criticising the actions of those patentees who had acted against subjects 'in so violent a sort.'²³⁵ Spencer, however, went further by referencing the current contextual issues of dearth, poverty, and inflation. This, combined with the influx of patents of monopoly, had brought the realm to its knees. Spencer described this time as one of 'dearth when so great numbers of poor people ar[e] grieved already & exasperate ynough', occasioned especially by their 'own miserie & great want of food.'²³⁶ Being already at breaking point the poorer sort were more likely to be 'incited to soom[e] publique disorder.'²³⁷ He

²³² Ibid., fos. 36r-v, 80r.

²³³ Walter, 'Public Transcripts', p. 148; Archer, 'Rhetorics', pp. 163-4.

²³⁴ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fo. 38v.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

thus claimed that Darcy's patent itself was likely to provoke the rising of a 'popular multitude.'²³⁸ Whilst the prisoners' petition thus constructed a narrative based on loyalty to the Queen's prerogative powers, the accompanying letter sent by Spencer painted a rather different image of a city ready to rise.

In using this language of disorder, Spencer was even more dramatic and forceful than any of his predecessors had been. This of course may be regarded as simply a product of the context of the time; as he himself noted, issues of war and dearth had created much hardship and a general sense of disorder. However, a glance at the politics of Spencer's mayoralty provides a further explanation for his use of this tactic. Spencer was unpopular as a lord mayor; rumours of his corruption and his excessive wealth triggered much ill-feeling, especially by London's apprentices who believed him partly responsible for the various problems besetting the city.²³⁹ During the outbreak of apprentice riots in June 1595 libels against him were widely circulated, whilst rumours even spread of a plan to construct a set of gallows outside of his home.²⁴⁰ His support for the petitioners was therefore at odds with his usual tense relationship with London's subjects. His decision to express the grievances of the city against monopolies so forcefully may thus have been driven in part by his wish to court popularity, a move designed to curry favour with the leather sellers, workers, artisans, and merchants so grieved by these patents.

The city did more than just forward complaints; it also actively petitioned against Darcy's grant. On 27 November 1595, seventeen leading city officials signed a letter to the Privy Council, enclosing a petition which they requested be shown to the Queen.²⁴¹ Their letter made clear that the controversy between the city and council concerning the legality of Darcy's patent continued, as the city insisted on its own privileges to search and seal leather. The aldermen thus expressed

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ I. W. Archer, 'Spencer, Sir John (d. 1610)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1093/ref:odnb/26130> (18 Feb. 2020); D. Novarr, 'Dekker's Gentle Craft and the Lord Mayor of London', *Modern Philology*, 57:4 (May, 1960), p. 235; J. Walter, "'A Foolish Commotion of Youth'? Crowds and the "Crisis of the 1590s" in London', *London Journal*, 44:1 (2019), pp. 17-36.

²⁴⁰ Novarr, 'Dekker', p. 235.

²⁴¹ 'Lord Mayor and Aldermen to the Privy Council, the letter', 27 Nov. 1595, CP 141/351, fo. 169r.

their wish to try the validity of both patents by the law; the right to take to court any of the Queen's subjects was after all a 'free libertie' granted to all freeborn Englishmen.²⁴² The important issue of the royal prerogative, so crucial to debates in the religious and parliamentary sphere, remained at the centre of disputes surrounding this monopoly. Given his appointment as counsel for the city by December 1594, it is likely that Fuller helped the city to construct this appeal. As such, certain points in this supplication were similar to those articulated in the prisoners' petition. The aldermen were at pains to stress that by defending their own privileges, they were in effect upholding the Queen's prerogative powers, which they described as 'a most sacred & necessary thing in hir Princly regiment.'²⁴³ Truly to demonstrate their commitment to the same, they even requested that any legal trial concerning the patent be held in a private location, touching as it did on such a delicate issue as the prerogative.

The annexed petition contained a total of fourteen articles describing the 'enormities of Mr Darceys Patent.'²⁴⁴ Whilst the petition itself was unsigned, the accompanying letter was signed by seventeen aldermen, including Slaney.²⁴⁵ It therefore came from the highest of circles in city government. Throughout their petition, the city focused on the practical grievances surrounding Darcy's grant, rather than issuing an appeal citing their own authority and charters, arguments which had thus far proven to be ineffective. Their second article thus complained of various practical problems with sealing leather. Leather was sold to dyers to colour and to skimmers, sadlers, and glovers to cut, a practice which would mean that Darcy's seals were inevitably washed out or cut off. The aldermen noted that consumers would thus still be unable to discern good leather from bad.²⁴⁶ Their third demand mirrored concerns articulated by the leather sellers as they argued that Darcy's rates for the seal were 'verie excessive & beyond all proportion.'²⁴⁷ They claimed that such

²⁴² CP 141/351, fo. 169r.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ 'Lord Mayor and Aldermen to the Council, enclosed objections', 27 Nov. 1595, CP 141/350, fo. 168r. A copy can be found in LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fos. 40r-41v.

²⁴⁵ CP 141/351, fo. 169r.

²⁴⁶ CP 141/350, fo. 168r.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

were the rates that an artificer who cut between £30-40 worth of leather per year would be forced to provide Darcy with as much as a fourth of all their profits.²⁴⁸ Other charges the patent imposed also needed to be considered. For example, the aldermen noted that many leather makers would be forced to pay to travel to fairs and markets to receive their seal before they could sell the same, whilst their families remained 'idle' at home, and their households continued to incur expenses.²⁴⁹ The aldermen also stressed the problems created by the use of bonds, allowing the patentee to 'Comytt them to prison & thear[e] detaine them at their own pleasures.'²⁵⁰ Whilst they indeed described this as being an 'intollerable bondage vpon the poor', contrary to 'all reason equitie & law', the aldermen did not proceed to launch into a full indictment of the importance of common law as seen for example in the 'Reasons and Resolutions.'²⁵¹ Instead, they proceeded to appeal to the Queen directly. Aware of her cash shortages, the aldermen stressed that Darcy's patent was detrimental to the Queen's customs, negatively affecting leather exports. Many merchants, faced with the delays caused by custom officers inspecting their goods, had abandoned the trade, turning instead to the exportation of woollen goods. Perhaps here the petitioners were aware of the state's concern that the realm was already over-reliant on its cloth export trade.²⁵² Similarly they suggested that imports of undressed foreign skins had diminished as rumours of Darcy's rights to search had created a reluctance amongst subjects to dress the same.

The petition from the aldermen and city also repeated the concern earlier expressed by prisoners that patents of monopoly had become widespread. The aldermen thus listed seven other patents then in existence. As argued by Tyacke, the Leathersellers themselves had sought to make 'common cause' with other subjects grieved by monopolies: here we see the city adopting a similar tactic.²⁵³ The aldermen thus referenced Drake's patent for vinegar and aquavita, a patent held by

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² See B. E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642: a Study in the Instability of a Mercantile Economy* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 7.

²⁵³ Tyacke, 'Locating the English Revolution', p. 15.

Sir Jerome Bowes for the making of playing cards (which Darcy himself would later hold), and Nowell's patent for the making of brushes, bottles, and stone pots. The aldermen suggested that these patents

hath wrought a feare in the poor people that the like Patent maie bee granted for all other comodities, w[hi]^{ch} greife & feare in the popular sorte towthching that w[hi]^{ch} concerneth their lyving & the whole mainteynance of their poor famylies maie worke dangerous effect in the Common Wealth.²⁵⁴

The aldermen painted a picture of a larger atmosphere in which citizens decried the multitude of goods which had been monopolised by courtiers. Such sentiments would later be expressed in the Commons in 1601, as the MP Mr Hackwell expressed his bewilderment that bread had not yet been monopolised.²⁵⁵ Once again, the city attempted to stress the danger of disorder created by these grants. The sheer number of petitions produced against monopolies, in Darcy's case and others, suggest that this image of a city distressed by monopolists was no mere fabrication. The aldermen thus articulated their disdain and concern with Darcy's monopoly in a petition which focused primarily on the tangible effects the monopoly was having on the realm's leather workers and leather sellers. As such, the petition served as an important means through which the concerns of these subjects were addressed to council and crown, whilst providing a way for city authorities to cover their own political motivations for opposing the same.

The power of petitions as a tool of participation is illustrated clearly by the fate of Darcy's patent. By late 1595 the city and the Leathersellers achieved some redress; restrictions were imposed on

²⁵⁴ CP 141/350, fo. 168r.

²⁵⁵ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 381.

Darcy's patent.²⁵⁶ The influence of both stages of the petitioning campaign can be clearly seen, as many of these restrictions responded directly to the grievances articulated by supplicants. For example, grievances surrounding Darcy's ability to pick at will the location and times for leather to be sealed, concerns expressed so clearly in the 'Declaration' of 1593, were addressed in the order that all locations appointed for the sealing were to be chosen with the consent of the Leathersellers' Company. Complaints concerning Darcy's use of bonds as stressed in the 'Humble Petition' were also addressed. From henceforth, these were only to be taken from leather workers who offended against the patent. The city's concern in their petition that customs officers faced punishment for unwillingly allowing unsealed leather to be exported was also dealt with; from henceforth customs officers who mistakenly failed to spot unsealed leather were not to be punished with the loss of their offices. Further limitations were also placed on Darcy. For the space of one year, he was ordered not to execute the terms of his patent 'but in the space of vij myles from the City of London.'²⁵⁷ Finally, the legality of the patent was once again to be reviewed by the chief justices of the realm to ascertain whether the privileges of the city rendered it illegal.

A more complete and resounding victory for the petitioners was achieved with the later cancellation of the patent in full. On 24 January 1596, Slaney wrote to the Council celebrating the Queen's 'good & gracious inclination to revoke hir Patent, graunted to hir servant M^r Edward Darcey.'²⁵⁸ Slaney stressed that the city had long been convinced that the Queen, once informed of the abuses and illegal nature of the patent, would be happy to revoke it. Yet this cancellation was not without consequences for those who had petitioned so vehemently against it. The city and Leathersellers' Company were ordered to pay a fine of £4,000 into the Queen's Exchequer. Slaney's letter thus launched into a long-winded appeal, stressing the various reasons as to why the city was unable to pay the required fine. It would see the city articulate one last time their objections against

²⁵⁶ 'Particulars by Lord Burghley of the restrictions to be imposed on Edward Darcy', 1595, TNA, SP 12/253 fo. 168r. Given that the city complained of some of these issues in November, this likely dates from sometime after November 1595.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/002, fo. 73r.

the patent, repeating sentiments they had expressed throughout the entire petitioning campaign. Slaney thus claimed that the city had never forfeited their ancient rights to search leather nor given up the same via non-usage. He thus denied the need for the city to pay 'anie such fine...for redemption of that w[hi]ch [we] never yet forfeited.'²⁵⁹ Slaney also articulated a convincing narrative of the city's poverty to plead an inability to pay.²⁶⁰ Once again, contextual problems were cited to suggest that the collection of such a fine would be impossible and unwise. Slaney referred to the 'great scarcitie & dearth of victualls' in the city, which would make it hard for even the better sort of subjects to contribute.²⁶¹ Appealing to concerns with popularity, he also cautioned against the effects likely to ensure in 'ye harts and myndes of hir poor people', whose jubilation at the cancellation of the grant would be crushed if forced to pay towards its cancellation.²⁶² Once again, the effect of the queen's actions on public opinion was stressed.

The Leathersellers' Company also tried to avoid paying their share of the fine; their accounts list the payment of money to Fuller for legal counsel for a petition concerning the 'Request to gyve Mr Darcey money.'²⁶³ In this one last act of defiance by city and company, success was once again forthcoming; no evidence suggests that the fine was ever paid. Such was their success that the Leathersellers, vexed once more by a monopolist in 1619, would once again turn to petitions to challenge its implementation.²⁶⁴

The agitation of the city of London and the Leathersellers' Company against Darcy's leather patent offers a powerful example of a successful and sophisticated anti-monopoly petitioning

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., fo. 73v.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ ACC 1/2, fo. 65r.

²⁶⁴ This was a patent awarded to Lord Aubigny for the searching and sealing of leather. See Leathersellers' Company Archive, Court Minute Books, GOV 1/1, fos. 139v, 143r.

campaign. Supplications emerged as the chief means through which subjects disgruntled by this grant communicated their concerns to authority. In turn, the time and attention of the Council was frequently occupied by the subject of Darcy's patent. Both within and outside of the space of official company organisation, a variety of subjects involved in the leather industry responded to the monopolisation of their trade by turning to the device of petitions. Commenting on the political engagement of London's citizens, Archer has argued that various 'bread and butter' issues motivated subjects to engage in politics, frequently referencing their rights and privileges bestowed by the city freedom.²⁶⁵ The petitioning opposition against Darcy's patent indeed demonstrates the recourse to petitioning by subjects vexed by this burdensome economic policy.

The Darcy episode provides not only a detailed and well-documented case of anti-monopoly petitioning resistance, but also a valuable insight into the form, processes, and mechanisms of the petitioning process. It helps us to return to the issue of the relative influence of legal counsel and scribes on the petition as a document, and the extent to which supplications can truly be used to provide an insight into the voices of the people. The ability to trace the influence of Fuller in some of these appeals offers tangible evidence of the role legal counsel could play in helping not only to draft supplications, but to shape their overall narrative contents. Supplications such as the 'Reasons and Resolutions' suggest a more direct input by legal counsel. Even this, however, does not suggest that petitioners had no say in the supplications produced; they still played a role by suggesting points and grievances which they wanted included. Legal counsel was an important element in the petitioning process, but it should not cause us to dismiss the role of subjects in crafting petitioning complaints.

These petitions also provide us with clear examples of contemporary engagement with debates surrounding property and liberty in the Elizabethan period, as subjects expressed a clear awareness of their rights to property and their opposition to taxation without consent. Even in

²⁶⁵ Archer, 'Popular Politics', p. 42.

supplications where Fuller's influence cannot be so readily traced, subjects proved able to engage with ideas concerning rights, liberties, and the commonwealth. This offers powerful evidence that these topics were discussed and addressed outside of the confines of court or church. A correlation between arguments and themes so dominant in the religious politics of this period and in the economic objections to monopolies is also readily apparent. By referencing the prerogative and the centrality of common law, petitioners opposed monopolies by engaging with key issues in larger political and religious discourses. These debates and ideas became important bargaining strategies used by subjects to advance and defend their own economic interests: they were not ideas engaged with by MPs or common lawyers alone.

The petitions produced throughout this dispute were far from formulaic. Petitioners included appeals to such concepts as liberty, the commonwealth, and the private and public, ideas which were widely diffused throughout the realm and appropriated by subjects to articulate their case in the most persuasive of terms. As both sides adopted this rhetoric, the council and queen were faced with a situation in which divergent economic interests presented themselves as speaking for the public good of the realm. Both used prevalent ideas in the political and religious sphere to articulate their own 'truth claims'.²⁶⁶

The 'Humble Petition' offers an example of the ability for subjects to produce cross-company supplications and coordinate to launch their own petitioning endeavours. Whilst the 'Declaration' appears to have been part of a larger opposition campaign co-ordinated by the Leathersellers and Skinners, it too shows the ability for companies to launch collective and joint action in the face of vexatious grants. Yet the case of Darcy's patent also highlights the extent of divisions within the early modern leather industry. Artisans clearly divided on their opinions on his patent; whilst some glovers and leather dressers actively supported his suit, others resisted it, preferring to remain subject to the orders and government of the Leathersellers' Company. To

²⁶⁶ Braddick, 'Mobilisation', p. 255.

explain these divisions, divisions which were made particularly apparent throughout this petitioning campaign, Darcy and his supporters levied accusations of the use of seditious and misleading campaigns by their opponents.

More broadly, this case has implications for our wider understandings of the relations between subjects and the authorities in the context of the tense 1590s. As Walter and Archer have argued, in this closing decade of Elizabeth's reign a strong perception of crisis was held by city authorities, even if the extent of actual socio-economic crisis in the city at the time has since been contested.²⁶⁷ Walter has argued for the need to understand this closing decade as witnessing a crisis of authority, as authority was sensitive to threats of popular protest and disorder in the capital.²⁶⁸ This was only exacerbated by the spread of libels and general attacks on figures such as Spencer.²⁶⁹ In turn, Archer has argued that London's rulers adopted a 'mediatorial' role and were prepared to respond to grievances to maintain peace in the city.²⁷⁰ This is shown clearly through the actions of Rowe, Slaney, and Spencer as lord mayors, all of whom forwarded grievances to the larger Council. However, their motivations in doing so must be seen as also triggered by the city's own dislike of Darcy's monopoly, infringing as it did on the customs and liberties of the city. The broader relationship between subject and state demonstrated by this case is best understood as one of 'negotiation.' Through petitions, subjects were able to negotiate the terms of Darcy's patent. Their use of the language of disorder and engagement with contemporary concerns held by the state, including larger constitutional issues and concerns surrounding poverty and vagrancy, provides further evidence of Walter and Braddick's notion that subordinates could negotiate with authority by drawing on the language of elites.²⁷¹ Subjects did this in ways which were much more complex than merely calling on their rulers to exercise their expected paternal roles, but by engaging with important notions of commonwealth, moral economy, customs, and liberties.

²⁶⁷ Walter, "A Foolish Commotion", p. 23; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 8-9.

²⁶⁸ Walter, "A Foolish Commotion", pp. 27-8.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 5-6.

²⁷¹ Braddick and Walter, 'Grids of Power', p. 42.

These appeals and communications were not without effects. In turn, examinations of the legality of the patent and commissions to examine its terms were appointed. This was ultimately successful; the whole grant was eventually revoked in the face of this petitioning campaign. Fear of disorder and the larger perception of crisis in the city must be seen as contributing to the success of the campaign. Yet this anxiety did not lead crown or council to adopt a policy of harsh oppression to popular activity in this instance. The petitioners were not punished; the imprisonment of leather sellers was for their continuing failure to adhere to the patent, rather than a consequence of their petitioning activity. The state and its subjects therefore entered into a relationship categorised by negotiation as petitioners expressed their demands and the state, on this occasion, proved willing to listen.

Chapter two

'Most odious and unjust monopolies': Starch, the Cranfield syndicate, and the London Grocers' Company

On 7 May 1603 the lawyer Richard Martin welcomed James VI and I to his new English kingdom in a speech delivered on behalf of London at Stamford Hill. Martin addressed James as the 'bright starre of the North', who 'like a new Sunne rying' had 'dispersed those cloudes of feare' hanging over the English realm.¹ Yet his speech contained more than just simple oratory and praise designed to flatter the new king. Martin also expressed the city's wish 'to lay open to a most skilfull and faithfull Phisition our true griefes', using the opportunity to lament grievances which had grown in the late queen's reign.² Amongst these concerns, which ranged from the presence of greedy officers, corrupt religion, and delays in justice, was a grievance which had grown especially pertinent in Elizabeth's reign, and one in which Martin had been particularly outspoken about in parliament in 1601.³ In his speech, Martin used the opportunity to express London's wish that from henceforth no subject would have 'his marrow suckt with most odious and uniuist Monopolies.'⁴

Martin was not the only subject to use the accession as an opportunity to communicate grievances with this contested form of prerogative finance. Public petitions circulated during James's progress south through his English realm intending to set the agenda for his reign.⁵ It was not just the realm's Puritans and Catholics who greeted the King with petitions calling for change; subjects also dealt with economic matters as they remained anxious concerning the future direction of the Crown's economic policy.⁶ In April 1603, a widely circulated document which blurred the boundaries between petition and libel articulated a total of fourteen numbered

¹ R. Martin, *A Speach Deliuered, to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie in the Name of the Sheriffes of London and Middlesex...* (London, 1603), sig. A4^r.

² *Ibid.*, sig. A4^v.

³ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 375-6.

⁴ Martin, *A Speach Deliuered*, sig. B1^r.

⁵ See S. Doran, '1603: a Jagged Succession', *Historical Research* 93:261 (Aug., 2020), pp. 443-65 for her suggestion that James's accession was not as 'smooth' as previously thought.

⁶ For petitions by Puritans and Catholics, see Doran, 'A Jagged Succession', pp. 459-61.

demands to the new king. Known as the 'Poor Man's Petition', this text was worrying enough to warrant an investigation by Lord Treasurer Buckhurst.⁷ Its seventh demand addressed the monopolies issue directly, as its anonymous author called on James to 'cutt of all the lycences, and all the monopolies' infecting the realm.⁸ Another manuscript document written in May offered a list of 'thinges grievous and offensive to the Comonwealth'.⁹ Amongst its grievances were 'Monopolies' as it identified numerous patents which had been granted and 'referred to remeady of lawe' including Darcy's patent 'for sales of Leather'.¹⁰ Petitioners clearly hoped that James would revoke many existing monopolies, lamenting the 'great trouble and excessive Charge' facing subjects who might be forced to resort to the common law to secure their cancellation.

These hopes and sentiments did not fall on deaf ears, at least not initially. As early as 4 May, James appointed six commissioners to investigate all 'monopolies and grants that are offensive to the subjects of this land', with a view to cancelling those which were particularly burdensome.¹¹ On the same day as Martin's speech, James issued a proclamation which publicly addressed the monopolies issue. James expressed his awareness that the 'Queene our Sister' had issued a multitude of patents which had either been abused in the execution or which were of a burdensome nature to the realm's subjects.¹² He thus ordered that from henceforth, no subjects execute any patent granted by the late queen, pending review by the Privy Council. Only those grants awarded to corporations of misteries and trades were to remain in execution.¹³ James also instructed subjects of the best means to seek redress going forward if any further patents were granted which proved to be vexatious. Subjects were encouraged to approach the Council 'by way

⁷ Heaton, "'The Poor Man's Petition'", pp. 105-20; 'Poor Man's Petition', 17 Apr. 1603, TNA, SP 14/1, fo. 64r; 'Copy of Poor Man's Petition', TNA, SP 14/1, fo. 65r.

⁸ TNA, SP 14/1, fo. 64r.

⁹ 'Things Grievous and Offensive to the Commonwealth', May 1603, TNA, SP 14/1, fo. 127; Tyacke, 'Collective Biography', p. 539 for his suggestion that this was written by Puritans.

¹⁰ TNA, SP 14/1, fo. 127r.

¹¹ APC, 32, p. 497.

¹² Larkin and Hughes, I, p. 11.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

of humble Petition.¹⁴ Yet, whilst this might have seemed like an open invitation to participation, this order did contain some caveats. Subjects were to avoid all ‘assembling and flocking together in multitudes’, and encouraged to petition ‘without numbers, without clamor, or any other kind of disorder.’¹⁵ If their petitions were thought to ‘tend only to slander and calumniation’, intent on ‘seeking publike redresses to utter private malice’, petitioners risked incurring the King’s displeasure.¹⁶ Whilst subjects were thus encouraged to use petitions to express their discontent with burdensome grants, James’s anxiety with potentially unruly or seditious petitioning behaviour was clearly articulated. Undoubtedly the memory of the gathering of ‘commonwealth’s men’ demanding redress outside of the Commons in 1601 cast a shadow of anxiety over the new regime.¹⁷

Despite the initial optimism James’s proclamation brought to the city and its subjects, monopolies were not to be a thing of the past. Instead, they remained a central feature of crown financial policy throughout the Jacobean period. Scholars such as Cramsie and Braddick have drawn attention to the frequent use of projects and monopolies throughout James’s reign, facilitated in part by the rather open nature of James’s kingship, and his desperate need for cash.¹⁸ Even in the early years of the reign, the young king proved easily persuaded by the promises for financial gain offered by the same. In an atmosphere of what Richard Tawney termed as ‘speculative fever’, monopolies came to dominate the early Jacobean political and economic landscape.¹⁹

The following chapter will move to consider the monopolisation of a commodity in the early years of James’s reign, involving not a grant bestowed on an individual courtier as seen in chapter one, but the incorporation of an entirely new company dominated and led by a merchant syndicate. In 1607 a licencing system was imposed on the commodity of starch and a new

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. By October 1603 James would also express concern with religious petitions, see Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 60-3.

¹⁷ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, p. 390.

¹⁸ Cramsie, *Kingship*, pp. 8-9; Braddick, *Nerves of State*, pp. 77-9.

¹⁹ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, p. 17.

Starchmakers' Company of London was incorporated. This triggered strong opposition from the ancient Grocers' Company. The process by which starch came to be so controlled has received brief attention in historiography, although largely within monographs focused on the careers of the courtiers and merchants involved in the same. It has thus been considered by Linda Levy Peck in her important study of Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton, and by Tawney, Menna Prestwich, and Anthony Upton in their various studies of Sir Arthur Ingram and Sir Lionel Cranfield.²⁰ The analysis of the resistance triggered by these events has been slight; Thirsk has noted the 'storms of protest' caused by the starch monopolies, yet the petitions produced in this episode have been largely ignored.²¹ Even studies of the Grocers' Company have neglected this important episode, focusing instead on the challenges posed to the Grocers in the early seventeenth century by the separation of apothecaries in their fold into their own corporation.²² Whilst a company history by Joseph Rees has offered a brief consideration of the resistance to the starch monopolies, his analysis is also rather limited, offering no real examination of the rhetoric of the complaints or the politics behind the monopolisation of starch.²³ This chapter will offer a re-analysis of this overlooked episode, to provide a fruitful example of anti-monopoly petitioning early in James's reign, an activity which was heavily influenced by the contextual issues of James's accession and his new willingness to grant patents of monopoly in the form of incorporations to bodies of traders and craftsmen.

²⁰ Peck, *Northampton*, pp. 67-9; Prestwich, *Cranfield*, pp. 69-70; Tawney, *Business and Politics*, pp. 96, 102-4; A. F. Upton, *Sir Arthur Ingram c. 1565-1642: A Study of the Origins of an English Landed Family* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 18-20. At other times the analysis of the starch monopolies has been incomplete or confused, see account in A. R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, 'Yellow Starch: Fabrications of the Jacobean Court', in idem (eds.), *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 69 which fails to note the establishment of a Starchmakers' Company and which suggests that the monopoly was held by Northampton alone.

²¹ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, pp. 84-92; Price, *English Patents*, pp. 37-8; Unwin, *Gilds*, p. 299; H. A. Auden, *Starch and Starch Products* (Bath, 1922), p. 6.

²² J. Stobart, *Sugar and Spice: Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 20-1; P. Wallis, 'Medicines for London: The Trade, Regulation and Lifecycle of London Apprentices, c. 1610-c.1670' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), ch. 2.

²³ J. A. Rees, *The Grocery Trade: its History and Romance* (London, 1932), pp. 123-7.

This chapter will begin by describing James's use of patents of monopoly almost immediately on his accession, describing their changing nature in this age of incorporation, and offering a brief consideration of the growth of anti-monopoly agitation in James's first parliament. After establishing this necessary contextual information, it will proceed to focus on the commodity of starch, describing the history of its monopolisation from Elizabeth's reign, the early collective opposition of the Grocers' Company, and the machinations of the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate to monopolise it. This chapter will focus heavily on the politics behind the monopolisation of this commodity. In doing so, it will illuminate the strong interactions between courtier and merchants, city and court, so apparent in the early seventeenth century, as patents of monopoly continued to dominate the economic landscape, and indeed the lives, of early modern subjects. The remainder of the chapter will proceed to focus on two documents produced in this dispute: a petition produced by the Grocers' Company and a counter-reply written by the new Starchmakers. Once again, focus will be directed to the mechanics of company petitioning and the various discursive mechanisms utilised by petitioners in their efforts to oppose this monopoly. The overlooked case study of starch will thus provide an important window through which to observe the practices and prevalence of anti-monopoly petitioning in early Jacobean England.

James VI and I inherited a realm already facing acute strain from the impact of war, dearth, and scarcity.²⁴ Like his predecessor, James turned to devices of prerogative taxation including impositions, wardships, and monopolies to make up for shortcomings in the Crown's ordinary revenues.²⁵ James's style of kingship also contributed to his readiness to issue monopolies. His willingness to take counsel from multiple sources made him especially susceptible to the proposals

²⁴ Cramsie, *Kingship*, p. 67; Braddick, *Nerves of State*, pp. 28-9.

²⁵ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, p. 16. For an older view blaming the King's own extravagance for these problems, see F. C. Dietz, *English Public Finance 1558-1641*, 2nd edn (New York, 1964), pp. 101-8.

of projectors and courtiers.²⁶ This, when combined with the Crown's continued cash-shortages and demands for patronage, saw James turn to issue monopolies with even more frequency than his predecessor, contributing to a larger culture of court corruption.²⁷ The 'courtship' between monopolies and the Crown which had begun to bloom under Elizabeth thus blossomed into a fully-blown reliance on monopolies.²⁸ In the years following the Anglo-Spanish peace of 1604, England's economy prospered and witnessed a period of optimism, driven largely by the expansion of overseas trading opportunities.²⁹ A range of monopoly grants for myriad products and industries were consequently issued, including patents to syndicates and numerous export and import licences.³⁰ The farming of customs to merchants and syndicates was extended in scope under James.³¹ Aware of the opportunities for profit provided by these opportunities, subjects turned to petitions to propose new projects to king and council. Surviving in the papers of Sir Julius Caesar, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is a 'catalogue' of 115 revenue-raising projects compiled in August 1609, attesting to the sheer extent of this monopoly-fever.³² As the Crown's debts continued to increase and patronage pressures mounted, monopolies continued to be regarded as a useful means to raise revenues.

By the early seventeenth century, the nature of monopolies had also begun to change. As Unwin argues, a 'Stuart policy of incorporation' witnessed the chartering of new domestic companies of artisans, craftsmen, and merchants.³³ Under the terms of James's proclamation of May 1603 these were an acceptable form of grant, causing many new projects to be presented under the guise of seeking to establish lawful corporations.³⁴ Fiscal motivations remained

²⁶ Cramsie, *Kingship*, pp. 47-50.

²⁷ For the issue of patronage and corruption in the economy, see Peck, *Court Patronage*, ch. 6.

²⁸ J. Cramsie, 'Commercial Projects and the Fiscal Policy of James VI and I', *Historical Journal*, 43:2 (June, 2000), pp. 362-3.

²⁹ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, pp. 95-6; Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, iii, pp. 129-31.

³⁰ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, pp. 95-6.

³¹ Ashton, 'Revenue Farming', pp. 310-22.

³² BL, Add. MS 10038, fos. 19r-22v.

³³ Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 142-8; Lipson, *Economic History*, iii, pp. 331-5.

³⁴ Unwin, *Gilds*, p. 301.

important; these companies provided the Crown with new sources of income in the form of loans or rents.³⁵ A range of new companies were thus incorporated, including groups as diverse as the Pinmakers (1618) and Tobacco-pipemakers (1619).³⁶ Courtier support and patronage emerged as an important way through which these groups gained the resources necessary to achieve the same. In return, many courtiers were given rents of some kind. As Ashton argues, the politics of court and city combined in the early seventeenth century; many courtiers were given patents or grants in return for a fee to the Crown, which they sublet to syndicates of businessmen or traders.³⁷ This in turn gave rise to conflicts of concessionary interests. These could occur between companies (for example new and old), between companies and patentees, and between the court and city.³⁸ These developments were a source of anxiety for the city's older livery companies. Not only did they face competition in the face of these new corporations, but many which were created were splinter-groups from pre-existing companies, consisting of disaffected members who had agitated for separation and their own charters.³⁹ For example, the Feltmakers' Company separated from the larger Haberdashers' Company in 1604.⁴⁰ Members of both the Skinners' and Cutlers' Companies also attempted to separate in James's reign; in 1606 46 members of the Skinners petitioned James for their own charter.⁴¹ As noted in chapter one, even the Leathersellers' Company faced attempts by glovers in their fold to separate. Whatever the motives of the craftsmen seeking separations, greedy courtiers and patentees could exploit such agitation to secure the creation of new monopolistic bodies, designed to serve their own private interests.

³⁵ Braddick, *Nerves of State*, p. 77. See Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 142-7 for his older argument that this was also triggered by the Crown's desire to assist small craftsmen in these companies, before fiscal motivations become more important.

³⁶ Unwin, *Gilds*, p. 302.

³⁷ Ashton, 'Conflicts' p. 115.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁹ Different reasons for this agitation have been suggested in historiography. See Carlin, 'Levelling the Liveries', pp. 9-10 for her suggestion that disaffected craftsmen petitioned for separation as part of growing attempts to achieve self-regulation over their crafts. See Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 126-36 for his argument that this largely occurred as smaller masters and craftsmen felt alienated from company leaders, many of whom were merchants.

⁴⁰ See I. W. Archer, *History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Bognor Regis, 2017), ch. 5.

⁴¹ Carlin, 'Levelling the Liveries' p. 10.

In this context, petitioning emerged not only as an important means to challenge monopolies, but also as the key device through which requests for incorporation were made. It was not long before James and his council began to receive such supplications. Already on his entry into the realm, James had been bombarded with petitions requesting bounty and rewards, many of which included requests for monopoly grants.⁴² These suits did not cease once James was settled on his throne. In 1605 a petition was sent to Sir Robert Cecil from the 'poore cardmakers of England'.⁴³ The petitioners lamented the effects of Darcy's patent for playing cards which had been recently cancelled by the decision made in *Darcy vs. Allen*.⁴⁴ They complained that they had been oppressed for as long as twenty-six years 'w[i]th the yoke of Crewell Monopolies' and more recently 'tiranizid' over by Darcy who had made immense private profits from the 'sweat of our browes.'⁴⁵ After rehearsing their complaints against his patent, a monopoly they feared might be re-instated, the playing card makers turned to their main request: to be made 'a Corporation' with a common seal.⁴⁶ Interestingly, they made an important distinction between 'Corporations that inable manypore famil[i]es to liue and Corporations of Monopolies thatt seeke the Ruyn of the Common Welth.'⁴⁷ This distinction was one that would become important as subjects both requested and challenged newly incorporated bodies, arguing for a difference between those which promoted trade and those which were merely 'monopolies.' The card makers claimed that their own corporation would be of the former type, enhancing the King's revenues, improving the price and quality of cards, and providing labour for a multitude of subjects. The petition serves to demonstrate that the charge of 'monopoly' could be levelled against those corporations which one opposed, whilst petitioners could simultaneously present their requests for incorporation as emanating from a genuine desire to serve the interests of the larger commonwealth.

⁴² Hoyle, 'Masters of Requests', pp. 573-5.

⁴³ 'The Cardmakers of England to Viscount Cranborne', 1605, CP 189/80, fo. 153r.

⁴⁴ See p. 31 of this thesis.

⁴⁵ CP 189/80, fo. 153r.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The issues of corporatism and monopoly became a concerted topic of discussion and controversy early in James's reign. In James's first English parliament (1604-1610) anti-monopoly discontent took the form of attacks on the charters held by numerous overseas trading companies.⁴⁸ The establishment of new corporations also triggered discontent beyond parliament, articulated via petitioning protest. On 8 September 1605, Cecil wrote to Lord Chief Justice Popham to express his concern with the lack of corporate organisation in the trades to France and the Levant.⁴⁹ He suggested plans to revive the recently dissolved Levant Company. Cecil noted that discussion of these matters had caused many merchants to 'putt vpp petitions, declaringe, that it is agaynst the lawes of the Realme, for the kinge to prohibite any marchant to trade, wheresoever he will.'⁵⁰ Subjects were clearly drawing on the language of liberty to protest the incorporation of this overseas trading company. Disaffected merchants also emerged as active petitioners against the creation of both the French and Spanish Companies on similar grounds that such bodies would infringe on their trading rights.⁵¹ The Stuart policy of incorporation was thus not without protest, and anti-monopoly campaigns began to take as their focus corporate bodies as well as letters patent granted to individuals. The case of starch provides us with evidence of a similar opposition directed not against an overseas company of merchants, but against a domestic company of craftsmen, launched in this larger context of concern and distrust in this age of incorporation.

The debates surrounding the incorporation of the Starchmakers' Company concerned the making and retail of a product which had become increasingly popular in the later sixteenth century.

⁴⁸ See introduction; Croft, 'Free Trade' p. 26.

⁴⁹ TNA, SP 14/15, fos. 84r-85r.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, fo. 84v.

⁵¹ For petitions for and against the incorporation of the French and Spanish Companies, see P. Croft, *The Spanish Company* (London, 1973); 'Reasons to prove the inconvenience of continuing the incorporation of Spanish merchants', TNA, SP 14/12, fo. 107; 'Arguments for the Charter of Spanish company', TNA, SP 14/21, fo. 1; 'Thomas Wilford to Viscount Cranborne', 2 Mar. 1605, CP 104/59, fo. 59r.

Occasioned in part by changes in fashion, starch was primarily used to stiffen both linen and the large ruffs worn on the necks of so many Elizabethan and Jacobean courtiers.⁵² Whilst previously it had been imported from the Low Countries, starch was increasingly produced in England from the 1560s in such areas as the suburbs of London, Norwich, and King's Lynn.⁵³ Whilst making it was certainly time-consuming, it could be done in the home, needing little specialised equipment and only a large room, tubs, barrels, and access to water.⁵⁴ The starching of linen soon became an important source of female employment, particularly for women in London's suburbs.⁵⁵ The use of wheat in its production meant that controlling its production become a necessity during periods of grain scarcity.⁵⁶ Numerous proclamations were therefore issued regulating starch making, and as Thirsk argues, this attests to the growing importance and spread of the industry.⁵⁷

This need for regulation provided ample opportunities for projectors to propose schemes surrounding this lucrative commodity. Starch was subject to the attentions of monopolists from as early as 1588. On 15 April of the same year, a patent was awarded to the customs official and Middlesex JP Richard Young, providing him with monopoly rights to produce, sell, and import starch made from bran for seven years.⁵⁸ Young was a close associate of Burghley and an intelligence-gatherer; he had been chosen as a commissioner to investigate the effects of Darcy's patent for leather in 1593. His gaining of the starch patent was both a reward for past services and to repay various debts the Crown owed him.⁵⁹ By 6 July 1594 the patent was re-issued to a different courtier and favourite of the Queen, Sir John Pakington.⁶⁰ He was awarded monopoly rights to import, sell,

⁵² Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, pp. 84-6; J. W. Knight, *The Starch Industry* (Oxford and London, 1969), ch. 2; B. W. Peckham, 'Technological Change in the British and French Starch Industries, 1750-1850', *Technology and Culture*, 27:1 (Jan., 1986), pp. 18-39; Auden, *Starch*, ch. 1.

⁵³ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, p. 103.

⁵⁵ For the role of women in the trade, see N. Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia, 2011), ch. 3. For the broader associations between starch and women, see Jones and Stallybrass, 'Yellow Starch', pp. 67-8.

⁵⁶ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, p. 103.

⁵⁷ Thirsk, *Economic Policy*, pp. 87-8.

⁵⁸ C 66/1312, *CPR 30 Eliz*, no. 560.

⁵⁹ Peckham, 'Technological Change', p. 19.

⁶⁰ S. Wright, 'Pakington, Sir John (1549-1625)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1093/ref:odnb/21145> (21 Apr. 2020).

and produce all starch from bran, with powers to licence other makers.⁶¹ Financial considerations were once again crucial for his receiving of the same; Pakington was in a large amount of debt.⁶² Such was his desperation for a monopoly that he had written to Burghley in March 1593 opposing a plan to make him and Young joint holders of the starch patent.⁶³ Not only did he express a rather insulting reluctance to be joined in business with Young, but he also stressed that the profits to be gained from the patent were 'too small.'⁶⁴ Pakington thus proceeded to negotiate with Burghley on the conditions of the grant, attempting to reduce the amount of rent he would be required to pay for it. After all, he reminded Burghley, the Queen herself desired that he might receive the patent to help his current 'necessity.'⁶⁵ The central role played by patronage and financial considerations, as well as the back-stage dealings required to attain such patents, are perhaps no more clearly demonstrated than in this letter.

Pakington's appeals were ultimately successful. Despite a temporary suspension of his rights to produce starch due to an outbreak of grain scarcity in 1596, Pakington's monopoly was reinstated by May 1598 and justified on account of his 'good service.'⁶⁶ He was once again given a monopoly on the importation, making, and retail of starch in the realm for eight years.⁶⁷ Pakington was also given wide ranging powers to search all ships, warehouses, and shops for all starch which was made and sold by unlicensed individuals. Whilst Young (now deceased) was not involved in the patent, two of his creditors, George Rivers and John Ellis, held shares in the same.⁶⁸ Starch, like so many other commodities, had been unable to escape the clutches of courtier-monopolists.

⁶¹ C 66/1417, *CPR 36 Eliz*, no. 769.

⁶² Wright, 'Pakington'.

⁶³ BL, Lans. MS 73/33, fo. 115r.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ 'Enforcing orders for marketing grain; Prohibiting unlicensed manufacture or sale of starch', in P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3 vols, New Haven and London, 1969), iii, pp. 165-6; C66/1492, *CPR 40 Eliz*, no. 1380; 'Granting monopoly for starch', 20 May 1598, in Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, pp. 188-93.

⁶⁷ 'Granting monopoly for starch', p. 189.

⁶⁸ Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, I, p. 115.

These developments led to opposition from one quarter in particular: the ancient Grocers' Company. The Grocers were one of the city's Great Twelve livery companies and specialised primarily in the retail of a range of luxury goods, including spices, currants, and tobacco.⁶⁹ The Company was quite varied in its membership, including both wholesalers who imported and purchased commodities in bulk, and smaller retailers who sold the same in their shops for private consumption.⁷⁰ Many London based grocers acted as middlemen, purchasing imported goods from members of the East India and Levant Companies by wholesale and selling them to provincial shopkeepers.⁷¹ The increased popularity of starch meant that it became an important product retailed by grocers. In a letter to Burghley in June 1595, the Grocers noted that starch was sold in the realm 'for the most part by the grocers of the Citie of London', who supplied chapmen with the product to take into the provinces.⁷² Inclusions in the Company's court orders attest to the retail of the commodity by individual grocers. In 1621 the Company launched a bill in Star Chamber against two grocers, Francis Newton and Richard Harbert, who had underpaid numerous starch makers for their goods by using false weights and measures.⁷³ Two women had supplied these men with starch in barrels, attesting not only to the role of women in starch making, but also demonstrating that this had indeed become a commodity purchased and retailed by the grocers by the 1620s. Yet this had clearly become an important part of the Grocers' trade as early as the Elizabethan period, causing the Company to resist its monopolisation from the 1590s onwards.⁷⁴

As early as 1592, the Grocers sent a collective petition to the Privy Council complaining of the 'griefs conceived by the Grocers touching the hard execut[i]on of hir Ma[jes]t[ie]'s Patent for starch.'⁷⁵ This was a large-scale petition, and whilst unsigned, was addressed from members of the

⁶⁹ Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, p. 26. For the early history of the Company, see Rees, *The Grocery Trade*, chs. 3-4.

⁷⁰ Stobart, *Sugar and Spice*, pp. 20-1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁷² BL, Lans. MS 78/76, fo. 187r.

⁷³ GL, Grocers' Court Minute Book, 1616-1639, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, pp. 162-4, 211-13.

⁷⁴ They also used active resistance, see *APC*, 23, pp. 45, 48.

⁷⁵ 'Patent for starch [1. The grocers' cause]', 1592, CP 142/125, fo. 158r.

Grocers' Company. No official payment for specific legal counsel or clerks to write this suit can be identified within the Grocers' account books, suggesting that the initiative to petition and to finance it may well have come from ordinary grocers affected by Young's monopoly, some of whom may have even been outside of the official company. The grievances articulated were manifold, focusing especially on the demands and conditions made by the patentee on the grocers. Not only were they forced to enter bonds agreeing to buy expensive starch only from the patentee or his deputies, but they were also made to 'buye licenc[e]s to sell the same Starch.'⁷⁶ The petitioners further complained that they were only allowed to sell starch to licenced individuals and alleged that Young was making profits of at least £3120 from his grant.⁷⁷

The petitioners proceeded to articulate similar arguments as seen in the Darcy dispute pertaining to liberties and the larger rights of the city. They thus complained that these bonds would 'restrayne their freedome' and that they were 'directly contrary to the liberties of the Citie', requiring as they did subjects to give up their trades and freedoms to buy and sell starch as they wished.⁷⁸ This was made worse by the continued imprisonment of grocers 'without open hearing and order' when they refused to enter these bonds.⁷⁹ Much like petitioners against Darcy's grant, the Grocers articulated their anxiety that the monopolisation of starch was merely a prelude to further grants. They suggested that 'as this thing is ingrossed by patent, to one, soe another may be to another, and in thend every comoditie brought into patents.'⁸⁰ Interestingly, the Grocers did not at this point call for the revocation of the grant but clearly attempted to negotiate with the Council on its precise terms. They argued that they were willing to enter bonds with just one of Young's deputies, James Anton, to buy starch from him to sell within the city. Perhaps some underhand deal had been made with Anton by the Grocers as they attempted to regain their control of the retail of starch.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The opposition of the Grocers only increased after the starch monopoly was transferred into the hands of Pakington. By February 1595 the Company court books recorded the referral of the 'matter of starche' for further consideration by its members.⁸¹ The Company accounts for the period July 1594 – July 1595 also recorded payments made to the doorkeeper of the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Egerton, for access to discuss the starch business.⁸² The Grocers continued to protest the monopolisation of starch via a mixture of active resistance and petitioning protest. On 20 June 1595, 37 members of the Company signed a letter to Burghley reiterating their disdain for the monopoly.⁸³ Once again, they presented themselves as willing to negotiate on the matter. Whilst they were not prepared to enter bonds to sell starch only to licenced individuals, they were prepared to buy their starch from Pakington only. Clearly Grocers were more concerned with the restrictions on the retail of starch, rather than who had the authority to make the product. They ended their appeal by calling for the release of two imprisoned company members, William Death and John Nevill. However, the Council proved unwilling to budge on this matter.

By 8 August the Company was ordered by the Council to read the conditions of the patent aloud at Grocers' Hall to ensure that all members adhered to its conditions.⁸⁴ Their active resistance of the grant continued; numerous company members and grocers from across the realm were imprisoned, turning to petitions to plead their case to officials.⁸⁵ By October 1595 the Council wrote to Lord Mayor Spencer reporting an 'outrage committed by certaine apprentices of London' who stole a cart-load of starch and 'grevyouslie beate' James Anton's deputies.⁸⁶ In May 1596 an

⁸¹ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/002, fo. 34r.

⁸² GL, Grocers' Wardens' Accounts, 1592-1601, CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/008, p. 492.

⁸³ BL, Lans. MS 78/76, fo. 187.

⁸⁴ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/002, fo. 42r; 'The Grocers to the Council', 18 Aug. 1595, CP 34/42, fo. 72r.

⁸⁵ 'Henry Bourghcher to Earl of Essex', 1592, CP 169/14, fo. 25; 'Henry Bourghcher to Essex', 1592, CP 179/130; 'Petition to the Earl of Essex [Nicholas Scott]', c. 1601, CP Petitions 1044; 'Thomas Cooper petition', CP Petitions 196. For active resistance see *APC*, 25, pp. 43, 49, 197, 258; *APC*, 26, pp. 434, 450, 464-6, 502; *APC*, 27, p. 95; *APC*, 29, p. 433.

⁸⁶ *APC*, 25, p. 16.

alderman from Exeter, William Martin, was also investigated by the Council for uttering ‘certeine undutiful and seditious wordes’ against the starch patent.⁸⁷

One particularly significant document sent to the Council in 1601 took the form of a list of complaints by 38 individuals, all of whom had been vexed by the actions of Pakington and his deputies.⁸⁸ The document was styled as a list of testimonies which had clearly been written in the same hand by a scribe employed for this task. Each statement thus began with the name of the aggrieved subject, and each was written in the third person, later edited with additions to read in the first person. It is likely that a group of disgruntled grocers came together to articulate verbally their complaints to a scribe who drew the same into this draft document.

The various testimonies primarily read as a list of the multiple abuses grocers faced at the hands of Pakington’s deputies. Such complaints as forceable entry into houses, the seizure of goods, use of bonds, and even instances of physical violence were all described. Many of those providing testimonies can be identified in the Grocers’ court records as members of the Company. For example, the same William Death whom the Company asked Burghley to help release in 1595 included a testimony lamenting his imprisonment in the Marshalsea. Nicholas Scott, a grocer who was imprisoned on numerous occasions, and who even petitioned the earl of Essex for assistance, also provided a testimony of his hard dealings at the hands of the patentee’s assignees.⁸⁹ Particularly interesting is an entry in the Company’s account books for March 1602. The Grocers noted the previous payment of a sum of £9 to their past warden Mr Thomas Boxe ‘to be employed for the revoking of the pattent for Starch then graunted by her Ma[jes]tie and in force.’⁹⁰ These payments had been made by numerous company members intent on campaigning against the same, including many of the grocers listed in the collection of testimonies of 1601. Seven men who joined in this collective testimony are recorded in the Company accounts as having provided

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 374-5.

⁸⁸ ‘Complaints of 38 persons for starch patent’, Oct. 1601, TNA, SP 12/282, fos. 54r-56r.

⁸⁹ CP 169/14, fo. 25; CP 179/130.

⁹⁰ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/02, pp. 274, 283; GL, Grocers’ Wardens’ Accounts, 1601-1611, CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/009, p. 44.

various sums of money for the campaign against Pakington's grant.⁹¹ Not only does this provide concrete evidence that the complaints sent to the Council in 1601 did come from numerous company members, but this also suggests that this collective statement of grievances was part of their larger, self-funded campaign of protest against this obnoxious monopoly.

By 28 November 1601, Pakington's patent was one amongst many revoked by the Queen's proclamation on monopolies.⁹² The patent for starch was criticised in speeches made by two MPs in the parliament of 1601. The MP for York, Doctor Bennett, and Richard Martin, serving as MP for Barnstaple, complained of the starch monopoly.⁹³ Pakington's patent also appeared as a grievance in a manuscript list circulating amongst MPs and recorded by the MP Henry Townshed, which complained of the decline in the Queen's customs caused by the domestic production of starch.⁹⁴ Whilst informing the House of Elizabeth's decision to issue a proclamation on monopolies, Cecil noted that Pakington's patent was one amongst many to be revoked. From henceforth, he noted, 'those that desier to goe spurcelye in their ruffes maye with less chardge then accustomed obteyne their wish.'⁹⁵ The decision to revoke the starch patent must be regarded as resulting not only from this parliamentary protest, but from the cumulative impact of the continuous active resistance and collective petitioning activity of the London Grocers.

At James's accession, starch was free from any monopolistic constraints. Yet the monopoly-mania of this age of incorporation meant that it was not long before efforts to monopolise the industry

⁹¹ These men were Fabian Fitch/Fryth, Henry Marshe, John Wiseman, John Nevill, Nicholas Scott, Nicholas Andrews, John Adshead, see TNA, SP 12/282, fos. 54r-55r.

⁹² 'By the Queene. A proclamation for the reformation of many abuses...committed by patentees...' (London, 1601).

⁹³ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 374-5; R. Zaller, 'Martin, Richard (1570-1618)', *ODNB* (September, 2004), (<https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/18206>) (1 Aug. 2022).

⁹⁴ Hartley, *Proceedings*, iii, pp. 383, 387.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

were made. A document in Northampton's papers suggests that in 1603 a group of starch makers had begun their efforts to be made into a corporation.⁹⁶ Like many other groups, these artisans were clearly attempting to take advantage of the accession of a new monarch to receive their letters patent. Seemingly this attempt failed, and the starch makers turned to parliament. The introduction of a failed bill in May 1604 in the Commons to redress 'abuses concerning the Making of Starch' may well have been an attempt by these subjects to reform the industry with a view to securing their own incorporation.⁹⁷ Despite receiving a second reading and being referred to a committee on 20 June, the bill was ordered to be put to rest until the following session on account of an inability for committee members to meet.⁹⁸ Clearly, the issue had not gathered enough support to receive adequate attention or prioritisation in this session.

The potential profits offered by this commodity soon caught the eye of syndicates and courtiers. In 1607 starch makers once again resumed their efforts to achieve incorporation. Yet they also showed themselves more than willing to work with courtiers to succeed in their aims. One undated account of the starch business notes that in 1607, starch makers joined with the courtier Lord Harington to request that 'by his mediac[i]on to the Lords...his Ma[jes]tie might be moued' to grant their petition for incorporation.⁹⁹ Lord Harrington was a courtier close to the King; in October 1603 he had been made guardian of the Princess Elizabeth.¹⁰⁰ His service in this role had led him to procure many debts: in 1612 he tried to recuperate some money by proposing a project for the making of brass farthings.¹⁰¹ His involvement in the starch project represented a similar effort to reduce his debts by involvement in a monopoly scheme. Sometime in 1607, Harrington thus petitioned the King concerning the starch makers' recent request to be made a corporation,

⁹⁶ 'Observations concerning the making of starch', BL, Cotton Titus B/V, fos. 259r-261r.

⁹⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 1, 1547-1629* (London, 1802), *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1>, p. 212.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-3, 252.

⁹⁹ BL, Cotton Titus B/V, fo. 260r.

¹⁰⁰ J. Broadway, 'Harington, John, First Baron Harington of Exton (1539/40-1613)', *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12327> (1 Dec. 2020).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

where once again, they offered the King an imposition of five shillings upon every hundred weight of starch they produced.¹⁰²

An undated document addressed to Cecil is likely the petition referred to by Harrington. Here, starch makers requested permission to be 'made a Corporation as other Trades be.'¹⁰³ The contents of the petition suggest a possible motive for their writing of the same; the scheme had run into some objections voiced by the Lord Chief Baron Sir Lawrence Tanfield, who expressed his concern that the starch making trade was 'a base thing not fitt to be enacted into a Corporation.'¹⁰⁴ However, the petitioners stressed that their trade was a 'necesitye' in the realm, employing 'thousands of his Ma[jestie]^s Subjects' and their families.¹⁰⁵

A further two documents likely written by these starch makers in 1607 provided a list of reasons and another petition for the necessity of their incorporation, based around the issue of the consumption of wheat supplies in the realm.¹⁰⁶ In the first the starch makers called on James to issue a proclamation ordering all starch to be made from bran, and to appoint 'Certeine Comyssoners' to check for abuses in the trade.¹⁰⁷ They requested incorporation as a 'Guilde or fraternitie w[i]th aurtheritie to make orders and constitutions for the orderlie governem[en]^t of all starch makers.'¹⁰⁸ In turn, they would make a 'voluntary offer' to pay the King five shillings per hundredweight of starch produced.¹⁰⁹

The second list of reasons for incorporation articulated similar points. Likely aware that the Council might fear that this imposition would cause a larger discontent, particularly in the aftermath of the recent parliamentary storm surrounding impositions, they stressed that the same would be 'no imposic[i]on by his Ma[jes]^{tie} vpon the subiect' having been voluntarily offered by the

¹⁰² 'Lord Harrington to the King', c. 1607, CP Petitions 1007.

¹⁰³ 'The Starchmakers', c. 1607, CP Petitions 2108.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ 'Plans for solving abuses in Starch-making', c. 1607, CP 141/348, fos. 165r-v; 'Reasons for a project and petition for starch', c. 1607, BL, Cotton Titus B/IV, fos. 297r-298r.

¹⁰⁷ CP 141/348, fo. 165r.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, fos. 165r-v.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, fo. 165v.

starch makers.¹¹⁰ Like the playing card makers, they made a distinction between monopolistic and legitimate corporations, stressing the need to incorporate a new body of starch makers to be based in London, where bran supplies were abundant, assuring the Council that the same would be 'no Monopoly.'¹¹¹ Appealing to the prerogative, the writers suggested that it would indeed 'stand w[i]th laws & his Ma[jes]^t[ie]^s Prerogative to drawe into one gov[er]m[en]^t ov[er]sight & direction' of the trade.¹¹² Reflective of the atmosphere of general optimism created by the Anglo-Spanish peace, this was presented as a means to boost the King's customs. Starch made at home could be exported to 'Spayne & other Countries', thus enhancing the King's revenues.¹¹³ Clearly, starch makers had joined to petition and implore council and crown for a charter of incorporation.

These starch makers had evidently been willing to join with Harrington to see their desires for incorporation come to fruition. In his own petition to the King, Harrington noted that these subjects desired that he 'wold be vndertaker for them to your Ma[jes]^tie' for this business.¹¹⁴ His assistance was necessary, he claimed, as they alone did not possess the 'charg[e]s requisite to the p[er]fectinge and orderinge of this busines.'¹¹⁵ The real motivations for his involvement are not hard to find. Harrington requested that James grant him the farm on these new impositions placed on starch for twenty-one years, in return for his payment of an annual rent. This project for incorporation proposed by Harrington and the starch makers attests to the alliances possible between artisans and courtiers. Both stood to gain from such affiliations; not only would the starch makers receive powerful patronage in their attempts to achieve incorporation, a support which was evidently lacking in 1603, but Harrington too stood to benefit financially.

Harrington was not the only courtier interested in the financial opportunities presented by such a scheme. Two important projectors soon turned their eye to the starch business: Lionel

¹¹⁰ BL, Cotton Titus B/IV, fo. 297r.

¹¹¹ Ibid., fo. 298r.

¹¹² Ibid., fo. 297v.

¹¹³ Ibid., fo. 298r.

¹¹⁴ CP Petitions 1007.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Cranfield and Sir Arthur Ingram. Both were important merchants of London and joined in a syndicate which was heavily involved in a variety of money-making schemes.¹¹⁶ As Ashton has argued, merchants such as Cranfield took advantage of the new opportunities offered by the granting of patents and customs farms to move away from more traditional forms of commerce, such as engagement in the cloth industry.¹¹⁷ Many such syndicates had the important patronage of a powerful courtier who either secured grants on their behalf, or sub-let them in return for rents.¹¹⁸ For the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate, this courtier was Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton. The syndicate they formed was involved in a plethora of schemes, including the monopolisation of the logwood so disliked by the Dyers' Company.¹¹⁹

They soon turned their eyes to starch. The pair first attempted to gain control of the industry in February 1607. A bill was introduced in the Commons on 23 February to 'avoid the wasting of Wheat, and other Grain, by Making it into Starch.'¹²⁰ It attempted to prohibit the making of starch from wheat as a first stage towards establishing a new corporation to control its production. The group skilfully presented these plans for regulation as emanating from a larger concern with the commonwealth, intended to prevent the waste of food supplies. Despite receiving a second reading, the bill was rejected on the 29 May, but it was voted for by both Sir Edward Greville and (ironically enough) that hater of monopolies Richard Martin, a close friend and attorney to Cranfield himself.¹²¹

The syndicate did not stop here in their efforts to control the production of starch. Aware of its potential value, the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate moved to reach their own agreement with the city's starch makers, undermining Harrington in the process. A letter sent from Cranfield to

¹¹⁶ For details of their careers, see Tawney, *Business and Politics*; Upton, *Sir Arthur Ingram*; Prestwich, *Cranfield*.

¹¹⁷ Ashton, 'Conflicts', p. 116.

¹¹⁸ Tawney, *Business and Politics*, p. 85.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9, 85-6, 104-5.

¹²⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, I, p. 339.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 376; *HMC Sackville*, pp. 154, 271.

Ingram on 18 August 1607 dealt directly with the starch business.¹²² Within his letter, Cranfield noted Harrington's agreement with the starch makers. He had promised to 'enter into great bonds' to give them thirty shillings for each hundredweight of starch they could make.¹²³ In return, Harrington would be rewarded with the 5 shillings per hundredweight 'for licence' to make the product. In his letter, Cranfield made clear that he had learned of this 'plot' through deceitful means. He had employed another syndicate member, Thomas Dalby, falsely to seek a share in this agreement to gather information on it. Cranfield expressed his belief that if Ingram offered the starch makers a similar plan to regulate the industry 'by Comissioners they wilbe glad to yeld to it when they see they Can do no better.'¹²⁴ Clearly, different courtiers and syndicates were simultaneously attempting to monopolise this profitable commodity. Yet the starch makers negotiating with such individuals were not merely pawns, exercising little or no agency. Cranfield made clear that in their agreement with Harrington the starch makers had 'abused my Lord grossly', proposing a scheme which would actually provide them with 'all the benefyte.'¹²⁵ Cranfield's suggestion that the industry be regulated via commissions also suggests that the starch makers' preference for such a system of regulation, as articulated in their own petitions, had caught the attention of the syndicate.

The Cranfield/Ingram syndicate managed successfully to wrest control of this industry. By 23 August, a new licencing system for starch was announced via royal proclamation.¹²⁶ The text of this proclamation was especially striking. It began by recounting the chequered history of the various Elizabethan starch monopolies and the opposition these provoked, which were denounced as being contrary to the 'Common libertie of the Subject.'¹²⁷ 'Upon Complaints of the grievance arising thereby', James stated, the starch patent had been revoked in 1601.¹²⁸ The proclamation

¹²² 'Lionel Cranfield to Sir Arthur Ingram', 18 Aug. 1607, WYA, WYL100/PO/6/XI/I, fo. xi.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 163-6.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

proceeded to lament the problems caused by the subsequent widespread making of the product throughout the realm, in a system lacking any regulation. It complained of both the 'noysome stench' and 'waste of Corne' its production caused.¹²⁹ Interestingly, James suggested that these problems had persuaded him of the need fully to prohibit domestic starch-making. Yet 'upon the humble suit of a great number of our loving Subjects' he had been made aware that 'the utter abolishing and taking away thereof, would be a great hinderance to them in their trades.'¹³⁰ James thus announced, through this public proclamation, a new system to regulate starch making. A commission was to be appointed to licence all individuals who wished to continue using the trade throughout England and Wales, and to ensure that starch was made from bran and not from edible wheat. All those making starch within forty miles of London and who wished to continue to practice the trade were ordered to appear before the commissioners at Founders' Hall in London to receive their licences, or to send the commissioners their names in writing.¹³¹ By 3 September this commission received its letters patent. Cranfield, Ingram, and Greville were all appointed as commissioners, attesting to their role in this new supervisory system.¹³² Other commissioners included members of the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate such as William Massam and William Angell.¹³³ This was a crucial step towards the monopolisation of the industry; the commissioners not only had power to licence starch makers, but far-reaching authority to search houses and shops in the realm for any starch produced contrary to the King's proclamation. On the same day, a new imposition of ten shillings on each hundredweight of imported starch was also introduced; James too stood to benefit from the changes in this industry.¹³⁴

The use of a proclamation to announce the creation of this monopoly commission marked yet another development in monopoly policy. Proclamations had long been an important tool of

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹³² C66/1744, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 338r.

¹³³ *HMC Sackville*, p. 154.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

governance in England, used by the Crown to communicate government policies and acting as an important source of news throughout the realm.¹³⁵ The number of proclamations issued per year increased in the early seventeenth century, as did the number of printed copies of each.¹³⁶ James issued proclamations more frequently than Elizabeth, using this device to announce the terms of new monopolies to his subjects. In turn, even illiterate subjects were made aware of monopoly policy through the public readings of the same in market squares and town halls.¹³⁷

The final move employed by the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate to establish a full monopoly control over the starch industry came in the form of a new corporation. On 8 November 1607 a new Starchmakers' Company of London was incorporated.¹³⁸ Both Cranfield and Ingram were members, attesting to the presence of merchants and projectors amongst the company's ranks; this was not simply a body of humble starch makers. The Starchmakers' first master was one Daniel Ballgay, a client of Cranfield.¹³⁹ The new company promised to ensure that all starch was made from bran only and they were given powers to search all starch made, promising to pay James impositions of five shillings on each hundredweight of starch they produced, and ten shillings per hundredweight of starch imported. The Company was given a full monopoly on the trade of starch-making. Ingram too stood to benefit personally; he was awarded the position of collector of the impositions with permission to keep for himself a twelfth of what he collected.¹⁴⁰ By March 1608, Northampton was given a farm of the impositions on domestic and imported starch, which he later sublet to Cranfield and Ingram and other members of their syndicate.¹⁴¹ Northampton had successfully gained the same farm earlier requested by Harrington.

¹³⁵ C. R. Kyle, 'Monarch and Marketplace: Proclamations as News in Early Modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 78:4 (2015), pp. 771-87.

¹³⁶ C. R. Kyle, "'Wrangling Lawyers': Proclamations and the Management of the English Parliament of 1621", *Parliamentary History*, 34:1 (2015), pp. 134-5.

¹³⁷ R. W. Heinze, 'Proclamations and Parliamentary Protest, 1539-1610', in D. J. Guth and J. W. McKenna (eds.), *Tudor Rule and Revolution: Essays for G R Elton from his American Friends* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 249.

¹³⁸ C66/1740, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 332v.

¹³⁹ C. T. Carr, *Select Charters of Trading Companies: A.D. 1530-1707* (2 vols, London, 1913), I, p. 120.

¹⁴⁰ C66/1744, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 337v.

¹⁴¹ Peck, *Northampton*, p. 68; Prestwich, *Cranfield*, p. 69; Upton, *Sir Arthur Ingram*, p. 19; C66/1726, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 311r; C66/1749, CPR 3-5 Jas, fo. 343v; 'Northampton to Salisbury', 14 May 1608, TNA, SP 14/32,

The starch industry was now fully monopolised by this powerful merchant syndicate. That this was a worrying development for the Grocers is unsurprising. Apothecaries in the Company, who sold and made medicines, were already agitating for their own charter of incorporation at a similar time.¹⁴² It is likely that the Grocers feared that those in their ranks who were so heavily involved in the starch trade would also move to join this break-away company.

Despite having failed to use parliament in their efforts to secure this monopoly, the narrative of the monopolisation of starch clearly attests to the importance of petitioning, patronage, and underhand dealings for the establishment of this new chartered body. By negotiating with those starch makers so desperate to receive their own incorporation, the Cranfield/Ingram syndicate were able to wrest control of the industry from the grasping hands of Harrington. The text of James's proclamation made clear that the 'humble suit' of his subjects, presumably of these starch makers, had persuaded him of the necessity of introducing a new licencing system. Whilst this petition does not survive, it likely reiterated similar points as found in earlier supplications presented by these subjects with Harrington. The important patronage of Northampton, combined with the financial opportunities starch offered, led to the successful monopolisation of this profitable commodity.

In response to these developments, the Grocers' Company once again emerged as active petitioners.¹⁴³ In their campaign of opposition they received the vital support of the lord mayor and aldermen. In February 1608, the Court of Aldermen decided that a petition by the Grocers

fo. 84; 'Earl of Northampton to Salisbury', c. 1610, CP 129/18; 'Statement that His Majesty, by several grants, demised for certain years...', 1619, TNA, SP 14/41, fo. 243r. Payments for rents made by Cranfield to Northampton for this can be seen in *HMC Sackville*, p. 156.

¹⁴² Rees, *The Grocery Trade*, ch. 16; Wallis, 'Medicines', chs. 2-3.

¹⁴³ The Grocers also challenged a patent for the making of 'blue starch' or smalt held by Abraham Baker, see Dietz, *English Public Finance*, p. 132; D. H. Willson (ed.), *The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer 1606-1607* (Minneapolis, 1931), p. 131.

‘towching starch’ should be forwarded to the Privy Council with letters of recommendation, to be delivered by the city Remembrancer Sir Clement Edmondson.¹⁴⁴ On 5 February, Lord Mayor Henry Rowe wrote to the Council, enclosing the petition.¹⁴⁵ Rowe noted that their petition had complained of the numerous inconveniences occasioned by the incorporation of the new Starchmakers’ Company. He had thus decided to forward it to the Council for their ‘Considerac[i]on accordinge to your wonted favour to the Comon-Weale of this Cittie.’¹⁴⁶ Expressing the city’s support for the suit, Rowe presented his decision to send their complaint as necessary to ensure that ‘such as are Freemen of this Cittie may Inoiye their Liberty and Custome of free buyinge and sellinge in their Trade.’¹⁴⁷ Rowe’s sending of the petition added an important degree of authority to the Grocers’ petition, whilst also articulating a concern with the effects of the starch monopoly on the larger privileges of the city.

The petition can be dated to around January to February 1608 on account of this letter. It was unique and interesting in form, consisting of a folio of text with an impressive 106 names collected into seven columns at the end of the document.¹⁴⁸ Its neat secretary hand suggests it was likely written by a scribe before being circulated to collect signatures and names of disgruntled company members. The petition was a large scale, collective petitioning effort, addressed from the ‘retailinge Grocers within y^e Cittie of London’ who were ‘members all’ of the Grocers’ Company.¹⁴⁹ The petitioners thus claimed to be those retailing grocers within the Company who sold commodities directly to consumers and chapmen. A search of the Company’s court records suggests that the initiative to launch this suit did indeed come from retailing grocers within its ranks. On 5 January 1608, a group of retailing members had approached the wider company court to verbally complain of the ‘wrongs & grievauces by them susteyned in their restraynt (by the

¹⁴⁴ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/031, fo. 155r

¹⁴⁵ ‘Henry Rowe to the Council’, 5 Feb. 1608, CP 120/59, fo. 59r.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ ‘The Retailing Grocers of London to Sir Henry Rowe’, c. 1608, CP Petitions 2110.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Patentees in this behalfe)' from purchasing starch.¹⁵⁰ They also complained of the imprisonment of one of their brethren, Robert Smith, who had refused to enter bonds promising to buy starch from the patentees only. The wider company thus decided to grant permission for these retailing grocers to 'exhibitt a petic[i]on' to the lord mayor and aldermen.¹⁵¹ This was clearly regarded as a means to ensure that the suit would be received by the King and Privy Council; the added legitimacy and authority of supplications which harnessed the support of the wider city was here recognised. The anxieties and indeed tensions within the Company created by this new corporation were also made clear. Within the Grocers' court, 'speeche' was circulating that one member named Robert Harvey had 'had a hand in the sayde busynes'.¹⁵² Harvey in turn successfully defended himself from such accusations, yet the inclusion of this detail in the Company's records attests to the larger internal anxieties created by the formation of the Starchmakers' Company. This rich entry also demonstrates that the initiative to petition against the grant had come from disaffected retailing grocers approaching their company court; this was not a top-down petitioning campaign launched merely by company leaders.¹⁵³ Whilst these retailing grocers may have used the company clerk to help produce this supplication, they were clearly being afforded an active role in the construction of their complaints.

In the text of the petition, the Grocers lamented the effects of the monopolisation of starch whilst presenting the Starchmakers' Company not as a legitimate organisation, but as a burdensome monopoly with detrimental effects on the trade of their members. They thus complained that the 'makinge of Starch is now brought into a few hands', causing the introduction of new 'vnreasonable prises' for the commodity.¹⁵⁴ Prices had increased from fifteen shillings per hundred weight of starch to as much as thirty shillings per hundredweight. Indeed, accounts in

¹⁵⁰ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/002, p. 485.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ By contrast, in the action against the Apothecaries' Company, the initiative to petition in protest seems to have been decided by the whole Company court and not merely 'retailing' members, see GL, Grocers' Court Minute Book, 1616-1639, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, p. 68.

¹⁵⁴ CP Petitions 2110.

Cranfield's own ledgers suggest that by 1609 some parcels of starch had risen to prices as high as 35 shillings per hundredweight.¹⁵⁵ Drawing on the language of private versus public good, the Grocers complained that these prices had meant that the 'private gaine of the pattentees is most vnconcionablye increased' whilst the 'Comon wealth [is] preuidiced.'¹⁵⁶ As in their petitions in the late Elizabethan period, the Grocers proceeded to complain of the practical effects these changes had on their abilities to buy and sell starch. Not only were they forced to 'b[u]y Starch' at locations appointed by the patentees, but they were also required to enter bonds promising to 'buy onelye of y^e patentees and their assignes.'¹⁵⁷ If they refused to enter the same, they were threatened with imprisonment 'w[i]thout any bayle.'¹⁵⁸

The Grocers also complained of the new restrictions imposed on the importation of starch. If any grocer purchased starch which had been imported by unlicensed merchants, it would be seized and retained for the patentees' own personal uses. In their efforts to appeal to the wider Council, the Grocers addressed the issues of corn scarcity and customs revenues which had appeared as chief motivators for the regulation of the trade in the King's own proclamation. This itself attests to the importance of proclamations for informing subjects of governmental policy and as texts which, in turn, could be used by subjects to frame their concerns in line with perceived policy agendas. The Grocers challenged the idea that the Starchmakers' Company and appointed commissioners were the best means of regulation to prevent the use of food supplies. Instead, the Grocers suggested that the domestic production of starch should be banned altogether, with all starch imported from abroad. Not only would this ensure that 'the Kings Ma[jes]t[ie]'s Custom[e]s would be much advaniced', but food supplies would be preserved.¹⁵⁹ Whilst this might at first appear as a rather selfless claim, this proposal offered a means for the Company to continue dominating the sale of the imported product to shopkeepers and chapmen. The Grocers ended

¹⁵⁵ *HMC Sackville*, p. 157.

¹⁵⁶ CP Petitions 2110.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

their petition by calling for the release of imprisoned members. In contrast to their suits in the 1590s, they were not prepared to negotiate with the patentees. Instead, they stressed their desire to be restored to their 'free libertie to buye and sell in their trade.'¹⁶⁰

The Grocers went further than merely lamenting the practical effects of the starch monopoly. They employed skilful and deliberate language designed to appeal to the perceived sentiments of the King. The Grocers thus included a reference to James's own proclamation of May 1603 to present the Starchmakers' Company as contrary to James's publicly stated monopoly policy. They thus suggested that 'if spedye reformac[i]on be not had', the Starchmakers' Company would 'tend onely to a monopoly.'¹⁶¹ Yet it had

pleased y^e Kings most excellent Ma[jes]tie by his royall proclamac[i]on in y^e first yeare of his highnes Reigne to signefye vnto all his lovinge Subiectes his princly care in the suppressinge of the same.¹⁶²

The Grocers thus drew on James's own proclamation to suggest that this new corporation was a form of monopoly, reminding the King and Council of James's early promises to reform such grants. Here, the assertion that James was a reformer of odious monopolies crept into petitioning rhetoric. Throughout their complaint the Grocers refused to refer to the Starchmakers as a legitimate corporate body, instead using the term 'patentees' to describe their actions. In doing so, they suggested that the Company was more akin to a monopoly grant held by unscrupulous patentees than a corporation consisting of starch makers. Through this language, the Grocers were able to present themselves as loyal subjects, intent on ensuring that the King's stated desires were followed, whilst simultaneously bravely reminding authority of the anti-monopoly policy which James had so publicly vouchsafed to follow.

The Grocers also drew on wider concepts of liberties, customs, and privileges, mirroring many of the sentiments seen in the campaign of the London Leathersellers. They employed the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

concept that a subject's trade was akin to their property and should not be infringed by authority. They presented the incorporation of the Starchmakers as an affront on the liberties of the Grocers and of the wider city, contravening the rights of freemen to buy, sell, and trade in any commodity. In the beginning of their petition they thus reminded Rowe and the aldermen that

by ye lawes of this Realme and y^e Charters granted to y^e Maio^r and cominaltie & Cittizens of London, by y^e Kings most excellent Ma[jes]^{tie} & his noble proguntors, everye freeman may by & sell, and vse every honest arte & means apperteyninge to his trade; y^t he can devise, to gaine his livinge w[i]thout any imprisonment their for to be inflicted onto him.¹⁶³

The restrictions on starch buying and selling were therefore contrary to the very customs and liberties of the city, granted and confirmed by monarchs throughout history. The imprisonment of numerous grocers for refusing the enter bonds was presented as a violation of the rights of freemen to gain their livings and livelihoods.

While stressing these general rights, the Grocers also proceeded to cite the terms of their own charter and the specific liberties this bestowed on their members to retail goods. Again, this stood to paint a contrast between the legitimate and ancient nature of the Grocers' Company and the Starchmakers as a new monopolistic institution. They referred to their most recent charter which had been granted by James in 1606. The King, they claimed, 'hath graunted & confirmed vnto them...all manner of liberties franchise, Customes & priviledges.'¹⁶⁴ These rights had been enjoyed on account of their 'longe seruice', but the Company were now 'restrained of that libertye w[hi]^{ch} was allwaies vsed as incident to their trade.'¹⁶⁵ The Grocers therefore couched their petition within a strong rhetorical framework of customs and liberties. As in the case of Darcy's leather patent, this should not cause us to argue that their petition was devised solely by a lawyer. No recorded payments in the Company court books to any specific legal counsel to write this suit can be located. By contrast, the Grocers would record various payments to specific lawyers and clerks

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

in their campaigns against the incorporation of the Apothecaries' Company.¹⁶⁶ The suit was most likely written with a large degree of input by retailing grocers themselves. These grocers employed the 'language of liberty' to defend their own interests in the face of the monopolisation of a commodity they had come to sell, drawing on their knowledge of the rights and customs enjoyed by freemen and the Grocers' Company more specifically.¹⁶⁷ The Grocers thus ended their supplication by presenting the Starchmakers' Company as tending to an 'evill example; the hurte of y^e Comon wealth and especially to y^e manifest wrongs of yo[u]^r Supplyants.'¹⁶⁸

The strength and sophistication of the Grocers' petition was such that the Starchmakers moved to respond to its accusations in the form of a detailed, and previously overlooked, counter-reply. This is extant in two copies in the papers of Cecil and Caesar.¹⁶⁹ The copy in the Cecil papers has been misdated to 1592, yet its contents make clear that this was a direct reply issued by the new company in response to the petition of the Grocers. The document consisted of two main sections, including a list on the left-hand side of the main points articulated against them by the Grocers, and another on the right consisting of eleven replies and rebuttals. In Caesar's paper this response is titled as a list of 'Artickelles moste humblie offered to yo[u]^r L[ordshi]^{pp^s} moste honorable considerac[i]ons by the companie of Starchmake^{rs}', to address the 'Surmizes aleaged in a petic[i]on exhibited by y^e companie of y^e Groce^{rs}'.¹⁷⁰ This copy of the document is dated to 17 February 1608; it was written quite quickly after the Grocers' petition had been sent by Rowe to the Council. It is possible that the Council ordered the Starchmakers to respond to the allegations against them, providing them with a copy of the Grocers' petition, yet no order for this survives. With no signatures and no petitioning address, this document is best categorised as a defensive answer and counter-reply written in response to the Grocers' petition. As a response by the new

¹⁶⁶ See GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/002, pp. 851, 898, 902-3, 918; CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, pp. 31, 55.

¹⁶⁷ Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society*, p. 423.

¹⁶⁸ CP Petitions 2110.

¹⁶⁹ 'Patent for Starch. Answer', c. 1608, CP 142/127, fo. 140v; Oxford, Bodl., MS. North. A. 2, fos. 67v-68r.

¹⁷⁰ MS. North. A. 2, fo. 67v.

company, the potential involvement of Northampton, Cranfield, or Ingram in its construction cannot be ruled out.

The Starchmakers primarily attempted to refute the claims that they were a corporation which infringed on the rights of the city. In their second point, they insisted that their intent had not been to 'impugne or infringe the liberties of the Freemen of London.'¹⁷¹ In reality, they had desired that the same would be 'maynetayned and pres[er]ved.'¹⁷² They also accurately noted that their charter did not infringe on any pre-existing charter or patent afforded to any one company, but most particularly to the Grocers. They argued that 'it dothe not appeere by what lawe or charter the buyinge & sellinge of Starche is graunted or doth app[er]tayne vnto grocers more then to anie other companie or traders.'¹⁷³ The Starchmakers proceeded to challenge other claims made against them, describing the charge that they imprisoned those who refused to enter bonds as being a 'shamelesse vntreweth.'¹⁷⁴ To appeal to the wider council, they also stressed their usefulness as a source of crown revenues. After all, they had willingly agreed to provide the King with an imposition of five shillings on each hundredweight of domestic starch they produced.

The Starchmakers went further than issuing simple defensive statements to challenge the accusations of the Grocers. Instead, they spent much of their reply responding to one key accusation made against them: that they were a monopoly. In the face of James's own stated dislike of monopolies, the term had become a particularly insulting label of criticism, and one of which those accused attempted to challenge. The Starchmakers therefore moved to present themselves not as a monopolistic body, but as a lawful corporate organisation, thus playing on the same distinctions as articulated by the card makers in their suit to Salisbury in 1605. In their tenth point, the Starchmakers thus claimed that the 'pretence of a Monopolie imagined to ensue by anie thing done by vs is vanelie surmized', asserting that 'nothing is by vs done or intended that can fall

¹⁷¹ CP 142/127, fo. 140v.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

w[i]th in the Compas of that imputac[i]on.¹⁷⁵ In order to challenge this accusation, the Starchmakers spent much of their reply presenting themselves as a legitimate corporate body established by James's letters patent. They also presented themselves as not only a compassionate company, but also rather open in their membership, a particularly strong and interesting defence against the accusation of monopoly. They suggested that their Company did 'consist of many members or persons', all of whom were to hold an interest in the profits, 'bargayninge & dealings' of the organisation.¹⁷⁶ Since their formation, 'a greater number of more honeste and sufficient persons' had already been licenced to make starch in comparison to the small number of deceitful makers who had previously exercised the trade.¹⁷⁷ As their numbers continued to grow, 'itt is not yet knowne of how greate a number this Companie of Starchemakers will Consiste.'¹⁷⁸ Far from reducing the trade into the 'hands of a few men', the Company and the appointed commissioners had allowed many to make starch, provided that they did so using bran in fit locations. Only those who refused to adhere to these rules were to be barred.

The Company also moved to present themselves as a useful corporate body which worked for the benefits of all members as was necessary for a corporate commonwealth of like-minded brethren.¹⁷⁹ A decline in starch sales, occasioned by the wilful resistance of the Grocers, had forced the Starchmakers to levy a common stock to help the 'poorer sorte of o[u]r Companie.'¹⁸⁰ This, in addition to the rents and the duties owed to the King, had meant that they did not gain ludicrous personal profits. The Starchmakers thus rather pointedly called on the Council to consider their 'inconscionable gaine', leaving the same to the Lords 'moste conscionable considerac[i]ons.'¹⁸¹

The Starchmakers also adopted another skilled tactic to undermine the Grocers' petition. As the Grocers were an ancient and powerful company, the Starchmakers could hardly criticise

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Withington, *Politics of Commonwealth*, pp. 129-30.

¹⁸⁰ CP 142/127, fo. 140v.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

their charter. To overcome this problem, the Starchmakers played on the language present in James's own proclamation concerning 'clamorous' petitions to paint the supplicatory activity against them as the product of a seditious, orchestrated campaign. In their very first point, the Starchmakers argued that

the principall p[er]sons p[ro]curers & p[er]secuto^{rs} of y^e sayde complaynts ar[e] not y^e retaylinge groce^{rs} as is p^retended, but only some fewe p[er]sons of y^e groce^{rs} Companie y^t ar[e] called warehowse men.¹⁸²

The Starchmakers here attempted to undermine the legitimacy of the complaint against them by suggesting that it had been written not by the full Grocers' Company or its retailing members, but by one problematic sub-set of their membership. They here targeted the 'warehouse men', likely those wholesalers in the Company who sold goods in bulk. It was these men who had spearheaded the petitioning campaign, procuring the support of a multitude of grocers who had been duped into signing their petition. They had 'exceedingly laboured the retaylinge groce^{rs} to loyne w[i]th them' in their complaint, allowing them to 'Cover or Collo^r there p^retence by vsinge the name of the retaylinge groce^{rs}.'¹⁸³ The Starchmakers proceeded to play on the notions of disorderly and slanderous petitions articulated by James himself to present their complaint as an 'vntrue and Claymorous petic[i]on.'¹⁸⁴ By presenting the Grocers' supplication as merely the work of a few disgruntled individuals who falsely persuaded others to sign, the strength of the supplication as a legitimate collective endeavour was questioned. Playing on ideas of the moral economy, the Starchmakers claimed that this one greedy subset had sought to 'engrosse into there handes y^e trade of forestalling of Starche.'¹⁸⁵ This accusation may have been included by some starch makers who had split from the larger Grocers' Company, and who may have harboured resentment at some of their old colleagues who were seen as engrossing the trade. These warehouse men were

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

presented as rebellious subjects, as ‘contemners of his Ma[jes]t[ie]’s lawfull p[ro]ceedings’ who sought to ‘ruinate the younge Companie of starchemakers.’¹⁸⁶ Any abuses in starch making which had occurred since their incorporation were the fault of these warehouse men, who had refused to buy starch from licenced individuals. Whilst the Starchmakers’ Company had sought to ensure that all starch was made from bran and aimed to set ‘thousands of people on woork’, these greedy engrossers merely sought to dominate the trade. Ultimately, they had proven that ‘their owne gayne not the good of the Comon wealth ys the mark they ayme at’, private profit being the chief ‘direcc[i]on in all their acc[i]ons.’¹⁸⁷ The Starchmakers therefore attempted to undermine the legitimacy of a petition sent by one of London’s most powerful companies, presenting the same as part of a clamorous and self-interested petitioning campaign.

The Grocers and Starchmakers were in effect each presenting conflicting interpretations of the new company, as either a legitimate corporate institution or a monopoly body. In doing so, both used their petitions to communicate different ‘truth claims’ whilst claiming to be the authoritative voice on the state of this trade.¹⁸⁸ Both stressed the authority of their views, the Grocers by stressing their existence as an ancient and settled corporation, and the Starchmakers by undermining the notion that the petition against them had been written by the entirety of this important corporate body. Both petitions therefore involved the construction of differing narratives concerning the Starchmakers, providing an early example of the articulation of rival claims which created, in effect, questions surrounding the authority of different truth claims.¹⁸⁹

The strength of the Starchmakers’ response was enough to ensure that the starch commission and new company were not revoked at this stage. Their presentation of themselves as a legitimate and beneficial corporate body had proven stronger than the Grocers’ claims. The combined influence of Cranfield, Ingram, and Northampton in the grant also likely contributed to

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Braddick, *God’s Fury*, ch. 16.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 459.

the failure of the Grocers' resistance. Peck has estimated that Northampton made profits of as much as £15,750 from the starch monopolies and from a pension eventually awarded to him on their cancellation; it is highly unlikely that he would have wanted this new system of regulation disrupted.¹⁹⁰ By 5 July 1608, yet another proclamation on starch was issued, criticising the active resistance of 'many bad and ill disposed persons' who continued to make starch without licences.¹⁹¹ The proclamation announced the appointment of commissioners with powers to search all parcels of bran and musty wheat which were intended to be used for starch making, to ensure that none was made from any good wheat, pollard, or bran supplies. They were also to ensure that the terms of the proclamation were adhered to, and that starch was not made by any unlicensed individuals. Numerous commissioners were appointed by 28 November, including the Lieutenant of the Tower Sir William Waad, Ingram, and the Starchmakers' first Master Daniel Ballgay.¹⁹²

In the face of continued grain shortages, a complete ban on the production of starch was decreed by proclamation in January 1610.¹⁹³ The trade was described as a 'matter of vanitie', and from henceforth, starch was to be imported from abroad.¹⁹⁴ The quality of starch produced by the patentees had also become an issue. Greville complained to Cranfield that he had as many as sixty barrels of starch remaining on his hands which he could not sell.¹⁹⁵ In this context, the new Starchmakers' Company would be dissolved. The meagre revenues gained by the Crown for the same likely played a role here; in 1619 it was estimated that James had never received more than £166 13s. 4d. from the starch monopoly.¹⁹⁶ Northampton appears to have gained more in terms of revenue than the King himself, likely because his farm of the duties on starch only required him to

¹⁹⁰ Peck, *Northampton*, p. 69.

¹⁹¹ Larkin and Hughes, I, p. 189.

¹⁹² *CD 1621*, vii, p. 440; C66/1771, *CPR 6 Jas*, fo. 44. By August 1609 they were given yet another commission to execute the proclamation, see 'Commission to Sir Wm. Waad, Sir Hen. Montague, and others...', 14 Aug. 1609, TNA, SP 14/141, fo. 37r; C66/1820, *CPR 7 Jas*, fo. 44.

¹⁹³ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 237-41.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 238. For letters to JPs to enforce this, see BL, Lans. MS. 152, fos. 121r-122r.

¹⁹⁵ Prestwich, *Cranfield*, p. 70; *HMC Sackville*, p. 158.

¹⁹⁶ TNA, SP 15/41, fo. 243r.

pay James one quarter of the total revenues he received.¹⁹⁷ Northampton was also able to benefit from pensions bestowed in 1610 to compensate him for the loss of the grant. The starch patent attests to the potential benefits available to courtiers keen on involvement in monopoly schemes. Ultimately the combined influence of petitioning protest, active resistance, and grain scarcity led to the revocation of this new corporate institution.

The new prohibition on starch making was unpopular on all accounts. One individual reported to Caesar that JPs in Surrey were fearful to enforce the proclamation, concerned that this would trigger opposition in the Commons.¹⁹⁸ Starch makers of course resented this restraint. One projector informed Caesar that they 'gowe outt in speech: That they will still contynue & vse their Trade.'¹⁹⁹ The Bakers' Company also joined in complaints, frustrated that this prohibition deprived them of a means to sell bran.²⁰⁰ Whilst the Grocers had pushed for the importation of all starch in their petition of 1608, they were still reported as complaining that the foreign starch they were now forced to sell was 'ill dried & seldome or neuer well made.'²⁰¹ The use of a proclamation to prohibit the trade even triggered larger debates concerning the ability of the monarch to restrain a trade through proclamation alone.²⁰²

Despite this prohibition, subjects continued to make starch. On 22 August 1610, James issued yet another proclamation lamenting the failure of his subjects to adhere to the ban.²⁰³ James complained of the continued making of starch 'in London, and the Suburbs thereof', as well as the continued sale of the commodity by 'Grocers, Chandlors, and the like Retaylors.'²⁰⁴ Grocers were attacked for purchasing starch from 'needy and meane persons' at cheap rates.²⁰⁵ This had caused grocers to make for themselves 'great gaine', whilst they 'encourage and imboulden the Makers'

¹⁹⁷ Prestwich, *Cranfield*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁸ BL, Lans. MS. 152, fo. 117r.

¹⁹⁹ BL, Lans. MS. 152, fo. 123r.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² BL, Lans. MS. 152, fos. 127r-128v.

²⁰³ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 250-3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

to produce starch.²⁰⁶ Even a royal proclamation was not enough to prevent the Grocers' continued retail of starch, as they took advantage of the collapse of the Starchmakers' Company to purchase this from whomever they pleased.

The concerns of JPs in Surrey turned out to be valid. The starch industry emerged as a topic of discussion in the Commons in 1610 and was included in a petition presented in the name of the Commons to James on 7 July. The House expressed their concern with James's incessant use of proclamations, expressing fears that their use would trigger the introduction of arbitrary government.²⁰⁷ James's use of proclamations to enforce the terms of numerous monopolies, including that of starch, was a particular source of concern. Rudolph Heinze has found that the starch proclamations were included as examples in seven of the grievances in this petition.²⁰⁸ In response, James issued yet another proclamation in September, announcing his intention to combine these myriad starch proclamations into one final and comprehensive proclamation banning starch making throughout the realm.²⁰⁹

The opportunities for profit which this early corporate experiment had so clearly demonstrated meant that starch remained a target for projectors throughout James's reign. As early as April 1610, efforts were made by one anonymous individual to gain a monopoly to enforce the proclamation against starch making for a rent of £100 per annum.²¹⁰ By 1612, further discussions and deliberations occurred amongst councillors concerning the possibility of re-incorporating the Starchmakers' Company.²¹¹ Such plans fostered opposition from numerous quarters, including from one Mr Browne who complained to Caesar that the making of starch was but a 'Consuming plague' on the commonwealth.²¹²

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Kyle, "'Wrangling Lawyers'", pp. 134-5; Heinze, 'Proclamations', pp. 237-8; E. R. Foster (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament 1610. Volume 2: House of Commons* (New Haven and London, 1966), pp. 259-60.

²⁰⁸ Heinze argues that 4 of the 7 grievances in this petition used the starch proclamations as examples of grievances, see Heinze, 'Proclamations', p. 248.

²⁰⁹ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 253-7. This promised proclamation never appeared.

²¹⁰ BL, Lans. MS 152, fos. 117r, 123r-124r.

²¹¹ BL, Lans MS 152, fos. 127r-128v; BL, Cotton MS. Cleopatra F. VI, fos. 76v-77r.

²¹² BL, Lans MS 152, fos. 114r-115v, 129r-130v.

James eventually gave in to renewed pressures to capitalise on the starch making trade, especially as subjects continued to resist the prohibition. In May 1620, James issued a proclamation expressing concern that many men 'of wealth and ability' had been investing in the starch trade, 'secretly' providing 'great stockes and summes of money' to set people at work.²¹³ From henceforth, a new commission would be appointed to licence select individuals to make starch from unwholesome materials. By 16 June, Sir Ralph Freeman and others were appointed as commissioners.²¹⁴ The actions of these commissioners emerged as a topic of parliamentary complaint in the parliament of 1621. Approaching the Commons, numerous starch makers offered complaints of the injustice they faced at the hands of commissioners, complaining that they had been deprived from starch making and the means to make their living.²¹⁵

By 13 May 1622 a new Starchmakers' Company was incorporated.²¹⁶ It was remarkably similar to the earlier corporation chartered in 1607. The Company was given privileges to farm impositions of ten shillings on imported starch and five shillings on domestic starch, in return for an annual rent of £2000 to the King.²¹⁷ Once again, all grocers were ordered to purchase their starch from company members.²¹⁸ The new charter justified the creation of this new corporate institution with reference to the pressures on food supplies caused by the unrestricted making of starch throughout the realm, thus utilising the same justifications as seen in 1607.²¹⁹ The Company was consequently presented as a legitimate corporation capable of regulating this important trade. Interestingly, the charter suggested that a 'humble Petition' presented by starch makers had persuaded the King of the necessity of creating this new corporate body, suggesting that starch

²¹³ Larkin and Hughes, I, p. 474.

²¹⁴ 'Commission to Sir Ralph Freeman and others...', 16 June 1620, TNA, SP 14/141, fo. 135r.

²¹⁵ *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 511-15. For a bill introduced by the Grocers' Company against the same to parliament see GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, pp. 165-6, 292.

²¹⁶ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 537-40.

²¹⁷ Reference to this company was made in 1637, see TNA, SP 16/33, fo. 82. Carr argues that the charter ignored the previous incorporation of the company, see Carr, *Select Charters*, pp. lxx, 117-22.

²¹⁸ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 537-40.

²¹⁹ Carr, *Select Charters*, p. 119.

makers had once again petitioned for their own corporate identity.²²⁰ In its membership, the Company was different from the Starchmakers' Company of 1607. Its first master, Joseph Meade, was an active starch maker who had petitioned against the restrictive commissioning system in parliament in 1621, suggesting that the Company did include subjects who actively practiced the trade.²²¹ This was not merely a company of merchant-backers. By the end of James's reign, starch making was therefore once again monopolised by a new corporate institution.²²²

The case of starch and the incorporation of the Starchmakers' Company in 1607 offers a particularly rich and heretofore overlooked insight into the politics of petitioning and monopolies in early Jacobean England. The negotiations between starch makers, so desperate to secure incorporation, and merchants and courtiers hoping to profit from the same, attest to the machinations, alliances, and underhand dealings central to monopoly schemes. This case illuminates the importance of patronage, profits, and new and unexpected alliances in this culture of speculative activity.

Petitions emerged as the central device to propose and protest the starch monopolies. The rich records of the Grocers' Company provide an important insight into the mechanics of company petitioning, demonstrating the ability for members to launch the initiative to offer supplications, and to self-fund these suits when necessary. These petitions in no way subscribed to a standard form or arguments. In 1601, subjects thus used a collective list of testimonies to protest the actions of Pakington, yet by 1608 the Grocers instead adopted a large-scale, collective supplication to oppose the incorporation of the Starchmakers' Company. In the early Jacobean period, petitions for incorporation also became common as groups sought to capitalise on the accession of a new

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²²¹ *CD 1621*, vii, p. 514.

²²² By 1637 it was said to 'lyeth sleeping' for failing to pay rents due to the Crown, see 'Information as to the present state of the Company of Starch-makers', c. 1637, TNA, SP 16/377, fo. 82r.

monarch who proved willing to grant patents. In turn, subjects proved adept at playing on distinctions between monopoly and legitimate corporation to request their privileges as necessary for the proper regulation of trade.

The supplication offered by members of the Grocers' Company in 1608, and the extensive countersuit of the Starchmakers, attest once again to the importance of rhetoric in anti-monopoly petitioning suits. In the context of the recent accession, James's promise to rid the realm of particularly vexatious monopolies, combined with the broader acceptance of corporations in economic thought, became important frameworks for petitioners. The Grocers engaged with notions of monopoly to present the Starchmakers as an illegitimate corporation, a monopoly group who infringed on their established rights to buy and sell within the city. This was contrasted with their own position as an ancient and settled corporation. By engaging with James's own stance on monopolies, the Grocers' suit also attests to the centrality of proclamations as a vital source informing subjects of government policy and agendas.²²³ James's proclamation communicated to subjects his intention to listen to their grievances, ridding the realm of odious monopolists. It had even actively encouraged subjects to petition if grants were found to be vexatious. The Grocers thus cited the same to legitimise their own recourse to petitioning activity. Unfortunately for the Grocers, this stated policy proved to be markedly different from James's actual recourse to monopolies as a central aspect of crown financial policy.

The response of the Starchmakers further highlights the importance of the use of targeted rhetoric. By engaging with ideas surrounding corporatism, the Starchmakers presented themselves as a legitimate, open, and compassionate company. As such, they framed themselves as an example of the type of corporation so essential to the early modern economy, regulating trade, providing employment, and supporting their brethren. By contrasting this with the engrossing activities of 'warehouse men', the Starchmakers were able to undermine the legitimacy of the

²²³ Kyle, 'Monarch and Marketplace', pp. 777-8.

Grocers' complaint and forcefully respond to the allegations made by this powerful company. Both the Grocers' and the Starchmakers' Companies presented themselves as the authoritative voice on the starch trade, producing conflicting accounts of each other's agendas. By utilising notions of commonwealth, moral economy, and corporatism each side made use of dominant themes in discourse as they attempted to present their own interests as beneficial for the wider realm.

More broadly, this overlooked case provides important insights into the wider politics of the court. The involvement of such figures as Harrington and Northampton in the narrative of this patent attest to the centrality of patronage to court politics in the early seventeenth century. Even artisans and merchants recognised the need to court a powerful patron to further their goals. In the Jacobean age of incorporation, the help of a courtier was seen as an important means to achieve recognition as a corporate body and to receive monopoly powers, even if this meant sharing some of the profits with court intermediaries and brokers. Subjects who found such support were more likely to see their petitioning campaigns for economic privileges succeed. Starch makers therefore found their efforts for incorporation successful after negotiating with Cranfield, Ingram, and Northampton. By contrast, the playing card makers lacked a court intermediary, failing to achieve incorporation in 1605. Northampton's involvement and support for the starch scheme likely explains why the Starchmakers were able to exist in the face of the Grocers' petitioning resistance, until the occurrence of grain scarcity meant that the problems occasioned by the industry could not be ignored.

Starch became an important source of political debate in city, court, and parliament. The strong interactions between city and court occasioned by the economic policy of patents of monopoly served to place this commodity high on the agenda of notable officials. As James's reign progressed, this interaction would only continue. In our next case study, we once again find artisans turning to a powerful court intermediary to achieve monopoly rights over a rather different product: glass.

Chapter three

'From water to fire': Sir Robert Mansell and the patent for glass, c. 1614-1624

Your honourable Uncle Sir Robert Mansel...hath been very notable to me, and I shall ever acknowledge a good part of my Education from him. He hath melted vast sums of money in the glass busines, a busines indeed more proper for a Merchant than a Courtier. I heard the King should say, that he wondr'd Robin Mansell, being a Seaman, whereby he hath got so much Honour, should fall from Water to tamper with Fire, which are two contrary Elements.¹

Writing to his former tutor Dr Francis Mansell in March 1619, the historian and political writer James Howell expressed an opinion likely held by numerous opposers of monopolies throughout James's reign.² Why, he wondered, had Francis's uncle, the influential courtier and vice-admiral of the navy Sir Robert Mansell, involved himself in affairs more fit 'for a Merchant' than someone of his standing? Howell was here referring to Mansell's monopoly for the making of glass granted by the King in 1615. His allusion to Mansell's fall from water to fire was a reference to the grounds under which the patent had been publicly justified. Mansell had been given exclusive privileges to fuel his glass-making fires with sea and pit coal, a move which was expected to preserve the realm's timber supplies. Yet Howell's own utterances within the letter point at the real motivating factors which often lay behind such schemes, motivations which went far beyond the good of the commonwealth. Howell was an employee of Mansell in his glass works in Broad Street, London. In 1616 he had been sent abroad to find workmen for Mansell's struggling works.³ In his letter, Howell proceeded to assert that his father was wary 'that this Glass-employment will be too brittle a Foundation for me to build a Fortune upon'.⁴ In many ways, this epitomised the main motivations encouraging courtiers, gentry, and merchants to embark upon such projects throughout James's reign: the revenue raising potentials of such money-making devices.

¹ 'Letter to Dr. Fr. Mansell', 5 Mar. 1619, in J. Jacobs (ed.), *The Familiar Letters of James Howell: Historiographer Royal to Charles II* (London, 1890), p. 103.

² D. R. Woolf, 'Howell, James (1594?-1666)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), (<https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/13974> (27 July 2021)).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 'Letter to Dr. Fr. Mansell', p. 103.

The monopolisation of glass occurred piecemeal and in numerous stages throughout the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Would-be projectors saw glass as an ideal opportunity to fill their own pockets. From 1552 patents were granted to foreigners to make glass in England and to teach native subjects the skills required to do so too.⁵ The larger move into the scandalous phase of monopolies saw the recipients of these grants change; they were issued to a range of courtiers before the grant settled solely into the grasping hands of Mansell. These patents provoked reactions and protests across the realm. In turn the politics, business, and enforcement of the glass patents dominated the time and attention of crown, council, and even parliament, as subjects employed numerous means to challenge this allegedly ‘parasitic’ grant.⁶ Chief of these was petitioning. Via a mixture of manuscript and printed petitions glassmakers articulated their discontent with Mansell’s new occupation as they attempted to regain control over their trade.

Hitherto the history of the glass patents has been told within larger monographs charting the general rise and development of the English and Scottish glass industries.⁷ The patents have been analysed in terms of their larger effects on the development of the industry, often praised for triggering the transition from the use of wood to coal to fuel the fires necessary to produce the commodity.⁸ That these patents were controversial has not been denied: Eleanor Godfrey, William Price, and Sean Bottomley have all drawn attention to the opposition the glass monopolies provoked amongst ancient glassmaking families.⁹ In particular the protests and active resistance

⁵ For a full overview of these patents, see A. Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses: An Account of Glass Drinking Vessels in England, From Early Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 1897), chs. 5, 7-8.

⁶ Price, *English Patents*, p. 80.

⁷ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*; D. W. Crossley, ‘The Performance of the Glass Industry in Sixteenth-Century England’, *Economic History Review*, 25:3 (Aug., 1972), pp. 421-33; A. W. C. Hallen, *French ‘gentlemen glass-makers’: their Work in England and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1893); D. C. Watts, *A History of Glassmaking in London: from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 2nd edn (Barnet, 2014); C. J. Clark, ‘The Glass Industry in the Woodland Economy of the Weald’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2006).

⁸ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, ch. 5; E. S. Godfrey, *The Development of English Glassmaking, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1975), ch. 3.

⁹ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, ch. 4; S. Bottomley, ‘Mansell v Bunger (1626)’, in J. Bellido (ed.), *Landmark Cases in Intellectual Property Law* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 1-20; Price, *English Patents*, ch. 7. See also J. Turnbull, *The Scottish Glass Industry 1610-1750: ‘to serve the whole nation with glass’* (Edinburgh, 2001), ch. 4; G. H. Kenyon, *The Glass Industry of the Weald* (Leicester, 1967), pp. 14, 132; W. A. Thorpe, *English Glass*, 2nd edn

offered to Mansell's monopoly by one glassmaker based in the Weald, Isaac Bungard, has been recognised.¹⁰ Scholars have painted a narrative in which Bungard was a villain, a 'vindictive, untruthful, and unscrupulous knave' who spearheaded an opposition campaign to disrupt Mansell's honourable efforts to develop the industry.¹¹ Whilst such accounts have noted the use of petitions by these glassmakers, they have often been dismissed as little more than attempts to obstruct Mansell's monopoly for the petitioners' own private interests.¹² Seldom have these petitions been the main focus of analysis, and yet the sheer number of those surviving in both manuscript and printed form renders this case particularly useful for a study of anti-monopoly petitioning protest in the middling years of James's reign.¹³

Glass emerged as a target for projectors and courtiers intent on securing control of the importation and production of a widely used material. The following chapter will focus on two monopolies for glass issued in the 1610s and 1620s: one to Mansell and an earlier patent issued to a courtier syndicate led by Sir Edward Zouch in 1611. In both cases, disaffected glassmakers, glaziers, and merchants turned to supplications to protest against these monopolies. Whilst many of our petitioners were based in London, subjects from further afield would send supplications against Mansell's grant to the House of Commons in 1621.

Glass was a product which was essential to early modern subjects. It fashioned noblemen's houses, provided apothecaries with medicinal wares, and adorned the parish churches so essential to the religious lives of subjects. The effects of its monopolisation therefore triggered opposition from a plethora of subjects. Within London these changes occasioned a strong battle of interests

(London, 1949), p. 117; Clark, 'The Glass Industry', pp. 82-4; G. T. Clark, *Some Account of Sir Robert Mansel Kt, Vice Admiral of England, and Member of Parliament for the County of Glamorgan...* (Wales, 1883), pp. 19-28, 39-41.

¹⁰ Especially in Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 95-100; Turnbull, *Scottish Glass*, pp. 78-87; A. W. C. Hallen, 'Glass-Making in Sussex, Newcastle, and Scotland', *Scottish Antiquary*, 7:28 (1893), pp. 154-5.

¹¹ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, p. 198. Similar sentiments are expressed in Kenyon, *Glass Industry*, p. 134; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 54-8.

¹² Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, pp. 194-7; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, ch. 5.

¹³ Heretofore only Hartshorne, Godfrey, and Clark have offered a brief analysis of the contents of the petitions sent to parliament in 1621 and 1624, see Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, pp. 195-200; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, ch. 5; Clark, *Some Account of Sir Robert Mansel*, p. 41.

as affected parties took different sides, all mobilising around this contentious issue. In contrast to the cases of leather and starch, petitioning in this case did not involve an incorporated body, but the unincorporated Glaziers' Company. Some members moved to support Mansell's monopoly, while others did not, thus providing another example of a temporary alliance made between courtier and artisan over shared commercial interests. The following chapter will draw attention to these overlooked negotiations and alliances, all of which were expressed and negotiated through petitioning complaints.

Petitioning protest was also launched independently of formal guild structures by the realm's glassmakers. Their petitioning activity was channelled primarily through two institutions: a new Commission for Glass charged with the task of investigating complaints and via that ancient body for the communication of grievances, parliament. As Andrew Thrush, Chris Kyle, and Elizabeth Foster argue a general decline in the legislative activity of parliament in the early seventeenth century meant that petitions overtook bills as the key means through which subjects attempted to influence policy and achieve a redress of grievances in parliament.¹⁴ Numerous institutional developments impacted petitioning activity, while the development of standing committees of the Whole House allowed subjects to petition more efficiently and cheaply.¹⁵ As Foster and Kyle have shown, this was important for anti-monopoly petitioning: the committee for grievances emerged as an important space for the examination of patents and monopolies, often instigated by the presentation of these suits.¹⁶ Whilst Foster has noted that complaints against the glass patent were examined by the Commons in 1621, her work fails to offer a detailed consideration of the actual petitions produced, focused as it is on the larger processes through which patents were condemned

¹⁴ A. Thrush, 'Legislation and Petitions', *HoP*, I, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/xi-legislation-and-petitions> (27 July 2021); Kyle, *Theater*, p. 141; Foster, 'Procedure', pp. 57-86.

¹⁵ Kyle, *Theater*, p. 141; Foster, 'Procedure', p. 60.

¹⁶ Foster, 'Procedure', pp. 67-72.

by MPs.¹⁷ An analysis of these supplications offers crucial insights into the impact of larger institutional developments on petitioning practice.

The case also intersects with other wider changes occurring in Jacobean political culture. Millstone's analysis of the vibrancy of manuscript culture in the early seventeenth century has highlighted the proliferation of scribal pamphlets, many of which reported on parliamentary debates and proceedings.¹⁸ Particularly in the 1620s, pamphlets detailing speeches and debates circulated in abundance.¹⁹ As part of this burgeoning manuscript culture, the papers of two MPs, Sir Robert Phelips and Edward Alford, contain manuscript materials pertaining to the glass monopoly. These materials, subsequently overlooked, were copied and collected by both, demonstrating the importance attached to economic debates surrounding monopolies by both MPs.

As Kyle and Peacey have demonstrated, print also emerged as an increasingly important aspect of parliamentary culture in the seventeenth century.²⁰ Kyle has illustrated the sheer number of printed broadside petitions in the 1620s, arguing for their role in creating a new 'public sphere' of print in parliament.²¹ Peacey has similarly revealed the importance of cheap print both for widening access to parliamentary proceedings and for allowing subjects actively to engage in the parliamentary process.²² London's companies embraced these developments. Whilst they had long been lobbyists and petitioners to parliament, many turned to the use of printed broadsides in the 1620s to attack not only each other, but also monopolies which threatened their interests.²³ Other petitioners also turned to print as part of their 'discreet petitioning' efforts, using this new medium to ensure the wide circulation of their supplications amongst MPs.²⁴ Both printed and manuscript

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁸ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, ch. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁰ Kyle, *Theater*, ch. 6; Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, ch. 8.

²¹ Kyle, *Theater*, p. 10.

²² Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 17-18.

²³ Kyle, *Theater*, pp. 141-4, 163-7.

²⁴ Peacey, 'Parliament', p. 351.

petitions were presented against Mansell's monopoly, the latter preserved as part of this flourishing scribal culture. By 1624 glassmakers and Mansell himself would turn to printed briefs to circulate their case amongst MPs. The following chapter will allow an exploration of these material changes to parliamentary petitioning culture through a richly documented and hitherto overlooked case.

This chapter will also focus on the discursive mechanisms employed by petitioners as they contested these patents. Once again, the ability for petitioners to engage matters of public moment in the rhetoric of their appeals will be shown. As Cogswell has argued, the 1620s witnessed a high point of political discussion and public engagement with such issues as war, religion, and evil counsel in debates and in texts that circulated within parliament, the court, and the wider 'post-Reformation public sphere.'²⁵ These 'high' political themes seemed to have little to do with the grievances of the glassmakers. But as will be shown, the concepts of court faction, parliamentary liberty, and the dangers of the self-interest of corrupt 'public men' were ideas that penetrated the petitions of the glassmakers as they attempted to appeal to the public duty of the Crown.

So too, was the 'Tacitean' turn to political debate, most recently explored by Millstone. By the 1620s, James's English subjects viewed the political world through the prism of what Millstone terms 'politic reasoning': the interpretation of events as caused by the moral qualities of political actors, who were deemed as resorting to deception and dissimulation to achieve their self-interested agendas.²⁶ It was increasingly alleged that public utterances cloaked the hidden intentions of actors, intentions shrouded in conspiracy and deception.²⁷ These modish and cynical ways of viewing the actions of the ruling elite also shaped the content of petitions, including those concerning glass.

This chapter will offer a brief explanation of the development of England's glassmaking industry, and the various involved interest groups, all of whom emerged as important players in

²⁵ Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, ch. 8. Also see Lake and Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 279.

²⁶ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, p. 146.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146-7.

this case study. The chapter will then analyse the petitioning opposition against the grant in four stages. The first will look briefly at opposition in 1614 to a patent held by Sir Edward Zouch in the so-called 'Addled Parliament'. The second section will move to focus on Mansell's monopoly and the opposition this triggered between 1615-1621. The focus here will be on the important institutional development that this evoked, the Commission for Glass, established by royal patent in 1620. The final two sections will focus in more detail on the parliamentary petitioning campaigns launched in both 1621 and 1624.

Glass was a commodity of growing importance in early modern England, involving a variety of subjects in different sectors of the industry. Particularly crucial were those individuals who made the raw product, glassmakers who were based in areas of woodland including the Weald and Forest of Dean. From the late medieval period, the making of drinking glasses had been practiced by a few English families residing in Surrey and Sussex.²⁸ The parish of Chiddingfold on the Surrey-Sussex border was a particularly important centre for the trade. Members of the Peytowe, Strudwick, and Mose families were recorded as important glassmakers in the area and many of their descendants continued to practice the trade of their forefathers into the sixteenth century.²⁹ Despite their work, the glass trade was far behind the Continent in terms of sophistication and skill, and window glass was imported from abroad.³⁰ As such, the industry soon attracted the attentions of Lord Burghley. Patents for the making of glass were issued to foreign subjects encouraging them to settle in the realm and to instruct English natives in the arts of glassmaking.³¹ In time the industry spread to

²⁸ Crossley, 'Performance of the Glass Industry', p. 426; Clark, 'The Glass Industry', pp. 61-71; S. E. Winbolt, *Wealden Glass: The Surrey-Sussex Glass Industry (A.D. 1226-1615)* (Hove, 1933), ch. 2.

²⁹ Crossley, 'Performance of the Glass Industry', p. 427; Kenyon, *Glass Industry*, pp. 14-15.

³⁰ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 12.

³¹ One of the first patents granted was to Henry Smyth in 1552, yet the accession of the Catholic Mary I prevented his arrival into England, possibly because of his religious affiliations. See Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 16. In 1567 a patent was granted to two Frenchmen, Anthony Becku and Jean Carré for the

other areas including Staffordshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, and Winchester.³² Many subjects who would emerge as chief petitioners against the glass monopolies, including members of the Hensey, Tysack, and Bungard families, were descendants of either these foreign glassmakers or of those ancient English families who had first practiced the trade.³³

After glass had been made, glass sellers, merchants, and glaziers were important participants in the industry. Glaziers worked primarily in the cutting, staining, painting, and repairing of glass, purchasing their supplies from the realm's glassmakers.³⁴ In London, glaziers were organised as an unincorporated body of traders known as the Glaziers' Company; they would not gain an official charter until 1638.³⁵ However, they still attempted to control the trade of glazing within the city, running into frequent disputes with foreign glaziers who practiced the trade in areas outside of their jurisdiction, including in Southwark.³⁶

Letters patents were issued over different aspects of the glass trade throughout the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was not long before they became a patronage device.³⁷ In February 1592 a patent for the making of crystal glasses was awarded to the courtier Sir Jerome Bowes, the original owner of the patent for playing cards later held by Darcy.³⁸ Under

making of window glass in England for 21 years. See Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, ch. 5; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, ch. 2.

³² Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, ch. 6; Crossley, 'Performance of the Glass Industry', pp. 429, 433.

³³ Kenyon, *Glass Industry*, pp. 122-6.

³⁴ R. J. Charleston notes that the terminology between 'glaziers' and 'glass makers' can be confused, with some medieval glass makers described in records as 'glazier.' Those described as having land or wood supplies were more likely to be glass makers. See R. J. Charleston, 'Vessel Glass' in J. Blair and N. Ramsay (eds.), *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London, 1991), p. 254. See R. Marks, 'Window Glass', in Blair and Ramsay (eds.), *English Medieval Industries*, p. 265 for details of the process through which glaziers made stained glass windows.

³⁵ C. H. Ashdown, *History of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers of the City of London, otherwise the Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass* (London, 1919).

³⁶ D. R. Ransome, 'The Struggle of the Glaziers Company with the Foreign Glaziers, 1500-1550', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 2:1 (Sept., 1960), pp. 12-19.

³⁷ Another patent had been issued on 15 December 1574 to Jacob Verzelini, Carré's assistant, to make Venetian crystal drinking glasses for 21 years at Crutched Friars, London. See Watts, *A History of Glassmaking*, p. 37.

³⁸ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 39-40. See M. Unkovskaya, 'Bowes, Sir Jerome (d. 1616)', *ODNB* (May, 2012), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/3051> (28 July 2021). Bowes sublet this to two London based merchants, William Robson and William Turner, see Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, pp. 179-80; Watts, *A History of Glassmaking*, p. 40.

James, numerous glass patents were issued between 1606-1608 to courtiers and merchants bestowing authority to make and sell types of glass not covered by pre-existing grants.³⁹ A web of overlapping patents were consequently issued, each monopolising one aspect of the trade. Such was the confusion created that the Privy Council was frequently forced to deal with disputes between patentees.⁴⁰ As James's reign progressed, new motives emerged for the monopolisation of glass, allowing projectors to propose their schemes as necessary for the wider commonwealth. Concerns with timber shortages became especially pertinent from 1609; a proclamation in this year attempted to address wood scarcity, and in 1614 a bill was introduced in the Commons and the Lords for the same purpose.⁴¹ This in turn led projectors to seek new sources of fuel for the making of a multitude of products including glass.⁴² By 25 March 1611 a patent to produce glass was issued to a rather haphazard group of subjects. Thomas Mefflyn, the King's official glazier, Thomas Percival an inventor, and two courtiers, Sir Edward Zouch and Bevis Thelwall received a monopoly for the making of window glass in the realm using sea or pit coal for fuel for twenty-one years.⁴³ In return they were to pay rents of £20 per annum to the King and £10 to Prince Henry.⁴⁴ Their grant was justified on the basis that Percival had found a new method for making glass using closed clay pots fired with coal.⁴⁵

As inventors and subjects involved in the glass trade, Percival and Mefflyn's holding of this grant is not unusual. Yet the involvement of Zouch and Thelwall was certainly more puzzling. Zouch was a knight marshal in James's court whilst Thelwall served as clerk of the King's Wardrobe and

³⁹ On 5 October 1606 Bowes's patent was re-issued for twenty-one years and William Robson remained its chief executor, see C 66/1711, *CPR 3-5 Jas*, fo. 288r. On 27 October 1608 Sir Roger Aston was granted a patent to make glass in Ireland, see C 66/1711, *CPR 3-5 Jas*, fo. 287v. On 8 October 1607 a patent was issued to Sir Percival Hart and Edward Forcett to make Munro drinking glasses for a rent of 100 marks per year, see C 66/1744, *CPR 3-5 Jas*, fo. 337v. In February 1608 a patent was issued to Edward Salter and five others to make drinking glasses not yet covered by previous patents, see C 66/1751, *CPR 6 Jas*, fo. 219.

⁴⁰ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 38-46.

⁴¹ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 206-9; *PP 1614*, p. 233; *Journal of the House of Lords Volume 2, 1578-1614* (64 vols, 1767-1832), ii, p. 704.

⁴² J. U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (2 vols, London, 1932), I, pp. 158-63.

⁴³ C 66/1926, *CPR 9 Jas*, fo. 184. Unsurprisingly this provoked opposition from other patentees, especially Robson, see *APC*, 33, pp. 162-3, 173, 192-3, 250, 269.

⁴⁴ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, p. 412.

⁴⁵ Nef, *Coal Industry*, p. 219.

as a page of the royal bedchamber.⁴⁶ Their proximity to the royal person undoubtedly accounts for their ability to involve themselves in this grant, likely in the hopes of gaining personal profits. It was not long before the grant triggered opposition from the realm's glassmakers. Though it did not prohibit other subjects from continuing to use wood to fuel their glass-making furnaces, it still provoked opposition from subjects who feared the effects the monopoly would have on their trades. Prior to its passing, the patentees had informed Sir Julius Caesar of the protests already offered by 'many families of glasse makers' who claimed to be 'vndone or at least otherwise greatelie dampnified' by the prospective grant.⁴⁷ Yet the issue of fuel which was so central to this grant allowed Zouch to criticise these complaints. After all, he argued, it was better that the glassmakers 'receave preuidice, beinge but a few families' than that the 'Co[m]en wealth [be] bereaved of this benefitt.'⁴⁸

The grant triggered active opposition not long after its passing. In July 1613, two active figures and administrators in Surrey were asked to investigate the quality of Zouch's glass, Sir Edmund Bowyer and Sir George More.⁴⁹ They found evidence of an opposition campaign led by the important Wealden glassmaker Isaac Bungard.⁵⁰ They claimed that he had used threats and bribery to 'hynder and ouerthrowe the works.'⁵¹ Bungard was certainly not content to allow this courtier to monopolise an industry long practiced by himself and his ancestors.

⁴⁶ M. A. E. Green, (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1603-1610* (London, 1857), p. 42; 'Grant to Bevis Thelwall', 22 Feb. 1607, TNA, SP 14/26, fo. 126.

⁴⁷ 'Reasons to make glass from coal', c. 1610-1611, Oxford, Bodl., MS North A. 2, fo. 145r.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 'Copy of certificate by Sir George More and Sir Edmund Bowyer to King James I, on glass works by Zouch', 13 July 1613, Surrey History Centre, 6729/3/182. For information on these figures, see L. A. Knafla, 'More, Sir George (1553-1632)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/19177> (8 Aug. 2022); A. Davidson and B. Coates, 'BOWYER, Sir Edmund (1552-1627), of Camberwell, Surr. and Lincoln's Inn, London', *HoP*, I, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/bowyer-sir-edmund-1552-1627> (8 Aug. 2022).

⁵⁰ 6729/3/182.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The existence of this grant alongside so many others led to a state of confusion; patentees argued before the Council concerning their overlapping jurisdictions.⁵² By 4 March 1614 a new patent was therefore issued to Zouch and his associates to end these disputes. In return for a higher rent of £1000 per year this syndicate were to have a new patent for glass, and all previous grants were revoked.⁵³ This bestowed even more extensive powers than the previous patent. It prohibited all subjects from making glass with any coal and prevented the importation and retail of foreign glass. It was thus not long before it provoked active resistance from a multitude of disaffected glassmakers, who continued to import and make glass, including members of the Tysack, Hensey, and Bungard families.⁵⁴

The opening of parliament in April 1614 offered subjects a new avenue through which to articulate their protests. The strict enforcement of the monopoly by the Privy Council may have contributed to the decision to direct complaints to a new, potentially more receptive body of authority. This parliament would come to be termed as the 'Addled Parliament'. Meeting for a mere two months, it passed no bills. James's decision to call it was motivated by financial considerations; despite experimenting with a multitude of revenue-raising projects, the King desperately needed supply.⁵⁵ Yet its proceedings were nothing short of chaotic. Accusations that 'undertakers' had rigged elections were a heated source of debate, and a strong attack was made on James's use of impositions.⁵⁶ The impositions question generated discussion of constitutional issues including the power of the royal prerogative and subjects' liberties.⁵⁷ Monopolies, and especially that of glass, emerged as a key issue energising these chaotic proceedings.

⁵² The extent of confusion was such that on 14 November 1613 Coke was charged with hearing the dispute between Robson, Bowes, Salter, and others, see *APC*, 33, pp. 192-3, 250, 269, 376-7; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 65-70.

⁵³ *C 66/1993, CPR 10-11 Jas*, fo. 261; *APC*, 33, p. 269; 'Earl of Suffolk to Sir Thos: Lake', 17 Nov. 1613, TNA, SP 14/75, fo. 27r. The patentees were required to pay compensation to the past patentees. See *APC*, 33, pp. 497-8, 659-60; *APC*, 34, pp. 15-16, 95-6, 196-7, 250-1.

⁵⁴ *APC*, 33, pp. 634-5, 643, 668-71.

⁵⁵ L. L. Peck, 'The Earl of Northampton, Merchant Grievances and the Addled Parliament of 1614', *Historical Journal*, 24:3 (1981), p. 544; T. L. Moir, *The Addled Parliament of 1614* (Oxford, 1958).

⁵⁶ Peck, 'Addled Parliament', pp. 548-9

⁵⁷ *PP 1614*, p. xiii.

Petitions were also an important feature of this parliament. Supplications on a range of issues were directed to the Commons, necessitating the creation of a committee of the Whole House on 8 April charged with the express task of hearing petitions.⁵⁸ Chaired by Sir Edwin Sandys, it became an important centre for the presentation of anti-monopoly complaints.⁵⁹ One anonymous diarist reported that the ‘committee were much encumbered with many petitions of grievances’ complaining of fiscal devices including ‘impositions and monopolies.’⁶⁰ Through their petitions subjects could successfully push issues onto the parliamentary agenda. In response to complaints received, committee members emerged as important speakers against Zouch’s patent on the floor of the House.

As early as 20 April Sandys delivered a report from the committee, condemning the glass patent as a ‘strong monopoly’ and a ‘surreptitious patent.’⁶¹ His concerns were likely triggered by the presentation of a ‘glaziers’ bill’ which was described in the diary of one anonymous MP.⁶² The reading of the bill had persuaded Sandys that Zouch’s patent was a ‘monstrous grievance to the whole commonwealth.’⁶³ Sandys himself had no personal interest or investment in the glass industry, but it offered one particularly unpopular example of the contentious use of monopolies by the King. Much like impositions, these could be attacked as a threat to the liberties of subjects. Petitions complaining of the glass monopoly thus provided Sandys with an example as part of his larger campaign against the undue extension of the King’s prerogative powers.⁶⁴

Whilst a copy of this petition is sadly not surviving, some clues concerning its authorship can be gleaned from elsewhere. Later in 1621 members of the London Glaziers’ Company made direct reference to their involvement in the parliamentary petitioning campaign against the patent

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Thrush, ‘Legislation and Petitions’.

⁶⁰ *PP 1614*, p. 303.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11, 116.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁴ Despite this and his agitation for free trade, Sandys was a strong investor in overseas trading enterprises, see T. K. Rabb, ‘Sandys, Sir Edwin (1561-1629), politician and colonial entrepreneur’, *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/24650> (1 Aug. 2022).

in 1614. They noted that they had acted as 'suters' in light of 'som[e] inconveniences that weare to be ffearred would ensue to this Common wealth by the execution of a pattent graunted to S[i]' Edward Zouch.⁶⁵ The glaziers' petition may also have been signed by some of the realm's glassmakers. On 4 May Sandys asserted that a member of the Tysack family, Paul, had been the first inventor of the use of coal to make glass, thus challenging the basis under which the patent had been justified as an invention.⁶⁶ Sandys here may well have been repeating a claim made by Tysack before the grand committee for grievances, either as a witness called to offer testimony or as an active petitioner.

Undoubtedly these complaints had a significant effect on the opinion of the House towards the glass monopoly. Once again, Nicholas Fuller emerged as an outspoken opponent of patents; on 20 April he delivered a speech comparing Zouch's monopoly to Darcy's patent for playing cards.⁶⁷ Appealing to the House's pre-existent concern with James's use of prerogative fiscal devices, Fuller argued that the glass patent was 'as dangerous as [the] impositions', 'taking away the mill stone from the poor.'⁶⁸ Sandys built on such sentiments, moving to express his concern with the multitude of subjects affected by the grant including 'merchants, glassmakers, woodmen, [the] company of glaziers in their cutting quarrels, and retailing them.'⁶⁹ The MP Francis Moore also made a reference to the 'joy' of subjects on James's accession on account of his 'proclamation...which took divers of them away', a clear reference to James's cancellation of monopolies in May 1603.⁷⁰ Ironically, even Mansell called on the House to ensure the 'overthrow of several patents' which had proven to be hurtful to the Commonwealth, an irony which would not be lost on petitioners in later years.⁷¹

⁶⁵ 'Copy petition of [named] glaziers of City of London', 1621, SRO, DD/PH/222/104, 105, fo. 182r.

⁶⁶ *PP 1614*, pp. 137-8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 138.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

The petition and these passionate speeches had their desired effect; Zouch's patent was adjudged a monopoly.⁷² The committee had emerged as an important space whereby affected subjects could express their discontent, allowing their plight to be considered on the floor of the House by some of the Common's most outspoken opponents of monopolies. When combined with larger concerns surrounding fiscal prerogative devices, this created an atmosphere in the House which was incredibly receptive to subjects' complaints. However, in their first attempts to use parliament as an avenue through which to secure the revocation of the glass monopolies, subjects would not achieve any lasting success. On 25 May, Sir William Chute informed the House that James 'looked for thanks' for the glass monopoly, a grant which he had 'taken great pains in.'⁷³ James had heard rumours that the House had 'hissed down' all members who wished to speak in favour of the patent, and he was disappointed to hear that some maintained that it was better to 'make glass of wood than of coal.'⁷⁴ Whether the House would have heeded this clear warning from the King to leave the patent alone cannot be known; the abrupt dissolution of the parliament meant that no acts or bills were passed. However, the opportunities created by this standing committee and the success of the glaziers in pushing their grievances onto the parliamentary agenda had undoubtedly opened opponents' eyes to the impact which could be had when petitioning parliament.

By the time of the 'Addled Parliament', abstract concerns about the royal prerogative were rampant, in relation to protests surrounding impositions. James, so vexed by these debates, dissolved parliament before any supply was granted to him. The glass monopoly tapped into these wider concerns, offering a pertinent example of a grant bestowed through the royal prerogative which deprived subjects of their trade and thus, their property. As such it received attention and debate in the proceedings of this particularly clamorous session.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 135-6.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 342.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 350.

Whilst Zouch's patent had been unpopular, the monopoly which followed proved to be even more vexatious. Aware of the benefits which could be gained from involvement in this lucrative enterprise, more courtiers sought to follow in Zouch and Thelwall's footsteps. By 19 January 1615 a new patent was issued to Percival, Thelwall, and Zouch, along with several new figures including Philip the earl of Montgomery, Sir Thomas Howard, and the prominent naval officer Sir Robert Mansell.⁷⁵ Mansell had marked himself as an exceptional seaman in 1596, receiving a knighthood from the earl of Essex in the wake of the Cadiz expedition.⁷⁶ In April 1604 he was appointed as treasurer of the Navy and a gentleman of the Privy Chamber. His move to enter into the dubious world of projecting is perhaps unsurprising; Mansell was notoriously corrupt as treasurer and found guilty in 1608 of embezzling as much as £1000 in wages.⁷⁷ He has thus been described as one of the top 'parasitic office-holders' of the Jacobean age.⁷⁸ By March 1618 he would be dismissed as treasurer on account of continued corruption in the Navy.⁷⁹ Yet he remained an important client of that rising star, George Villiers duke of Buckingham, a connection which was undoubtedly essential for his securing of the patent.⁸⁰ The new monopoly reserved the sole making of glass with coal to the patentees and prohibited the importation of foreign glass.

On 23 May 1615 a proclamation prohibited the use of any wood in the making of glass and ordered the cessation of the use of wood-fuelled furnaces.⁸¹ Any glass made contrary to the patent was to be forfeited and by 1 June the patentees were given rights to take such forfeitures for

⁷⁵ C 66/2019, *CPR 12 Jas*, fo. 98.

⁷⁶ A. Thrush, 'Mansell, Sir Robert (1570/1-1652), Naval Officer and Administrator', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/17992> (29 July 2021).

⁷⁷ Bottomley, 'Mansell v. Bunger', p. 9.

⁷⁸ Prestwich, *Cranfield*, p. 211.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁸¹ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 342-4.

themselves.⁸² At some point in 1615 Mansell bought out his fellow patentees, agreeing to pay rents to each in compensation. The realm's entire glass industry was now placed firmly in the hands of a single courtier; the ban on the making of glass from wood meant that only Mansell or those he appointed could make glass. All who wished to make glass had to receive licence and employment from Mansell, and numerous glassmakers were forced to enter bonds promising to put down their furnaces. Glass sellers continued to be restricted in their rights to import and retail foreign made glass, and glaziers, apothecaries, and builders had to rely on Mansell's glass for their trades. His frequent absence abroad on navy business made it essential for his wife, Lady Elizabeth Roper (Lady Mansell) to oversee his business when necessary. Elizabeth was a maid of honour in Queen Anne's household and would emerge as an active participant in Mansell's business affairs.⁸³ In January 1619 one disaffected glassmaker would thus direct his petition directly to 'the Lady Maunsell' and to Captain Robert Bacon, both of whom helped to manage Mansell's works at Newcastle.⁸⁴ By July 1623 three discontented 'artificers in glass making' would also petition the Council complaining that Elizabeth had abated their wages.⁸⁵ The glass industry was therefore fully monopolised by one man and his wife.

Unsurprisingly Mansell's monopoly met with a torrent of opposition: glassmakers, glaziers, and merchants resisted the grant with a new level of zeal, intent on achieving redress from a patent which fully monopolised the industry.⁸⁶ Bonds became a particularly unpopular instrument used by Mansell to ensure that glassmakers close their furnaces; by 4 May 1618 Mansell informed the Council that two glassmakers, Paul Vinion and Peter Comley, had signed such bonds.⁸⁷ Yet active

⁸² 'Grant to Philip Earl of Montgomery, Sir Thomas Howard, and others', 1 June 1615, TNA, SP 14/141, fo. 81.

⁸³ A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, 3rd edn (London, 1992), p. 35; Clark, *Some Account of Sir Robert Mansel*, pp. 39-41.

⁸⁴ 'Reasons addressed by Paul Vinion to Lady Mansell and Capt. Bacon', Jan. 1619, TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 28r; Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 82.

⁸⁵ 'Petition of Jas. Lambert, John Williams and Wm. Tudnam', 7 July 1623, TNA, SP 14/148, fo. 65r.

⁸⁶ For this resistance see Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, ch. 4.

⁸⁷ 'Sir Robt. Mansell to Sir Geo. Calvert', 4 May 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fo. 145r.

resistance continued and in July, Mansell was forced to appeal for council assistance as subjects continued to import foreign glass and to fire their wood-fuelled furnaces.⁸⁸

Petitioning also emerged as an important means through which affected subjects attempted to achieve redress. At first many of these petitions were simple requests for Mansell to grant individuals permission to use up their pre-existing materials; many stressed that they faced financial ruin if they could not use their wood supplies.⁸⁹ Mansell's lack of experience meant that the glass industry ran into difficulties soon after the granting of his monopoly. A lack of glass supplies and the poor quality of that which was produced led the Council to grant permission in April 1616 to Bungard and Edward Hensey to continue producing glass from wood for periods of 60 and 30 weeks respectively.⁹⁰ The glassmaker Paul Vinion even appealed directly to the King in January 1619. In his petition, written in the third person and most likely with the help of a scribe, Vinion was presented as having been since 'his Childehood exercised and trayned vp in the mistery or arte of Glasse making.'⁹¹ Annotated on the petition is a note by the Master of Requests, Sir Ralph Freeman, noting that the petition had been considered by the King at Royston who referred it to the Council for further examination. Petitioning through the official channels of the Masters of Requests was clearly still regarded as a means to gain individual redress, and one which could be successful.

Mansell issued a 'humble answer' in response, playing on concerns with idleness, poverty, and employment levels.⁹² He claimed that Vinion and other glassmakers petitioning for these licences were 'all strangers' who 'will teach no English their work.'⁹³ They were merely 'Nurseries

⁸⁸ 'Petition of Sir Rob. Mansell to the Council', July 1618, TNA, SP 14/104, fo. 38r. For imprisonments see *APC*, 34, pp. 344, 471-2; *APC*, 37, pp. 14, 45, 68.

⁸⁹ 'Petition of Nicholas Gillott owner of a glasshouse to Sir Edward Coke', 5 Aug. 1615, Staffordshire Archives, D408/F/2/(i); 'Bagot to Sir Robert Mansell', 1616, in W. Horridge, 'Documents Relating to the Lorraine Glassmakers in North Staffordshire, with some Notes hereon', *Glass Notes*, 15 (Dec., 1955), p. 32; *APC*, 34, pp. 469-70; 'Petition of Paul Vinion to the King' 10 Jan. 1619, TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 25r.

⁹⁰ *APC*, 34, pp. 469-70.

⁹¹ TNA, SP 14/120, fo. 25r.

⁹² 'Sir Robt. Mansell to the Council', 10 Jan. 1619, TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 26r.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

of beggars' who 'fill the land with their Children brought vp in ydlenes.'⁹⁴ By presenting these men as 'strangers' and aliens, Mansell attempted to undermine the notion that his grant was depriving English subjects of their lawful labours. Instead, these glassmakers were presented as immigrants. This was somewhat ironic; Mansell employed many foreign workmen from Italy and the Low Countries to produce his glass.⁹⁵ England's native glassmakers proved more than able to fight back against such claims. Not only did Vinion reply to this through another petition sent to the Council, but he also engaged directly with its anti-alien sentiments by reminding the Council that he was 'borne at Wisborrough greene in Sussex' and that he had 'no children.'⁹⁶ Individual glassmakers therefore used supplications as they attempted to limit the effects of Mansell's monopoly on their own trades.

By 1617 the Glaziers' Company also moved to lament the effects of Mansell's patent, attesting to the ability for groups who were unincorporated to organise and lobby. Glaziers were required to procure their glass supplies from the realm's glassmakers, and thus from Mansell and his employees. As such any changes in the price or quality of glass affected this group perhaps more than any other. On 23 April 1617 they expressed their concern to the Council, noting that

by reason of his Majestie's late letters patents graunted to Sir Robert Mansell forbiddinge any glasse to be brought from forraine partes there is such an exceedinge scarcity thereof as there is little or none to be gott for their employment in their trade.⁹⁷

As was so common in anti-monopoly complaints the glaziers stressed that this was causing the undoing of their wives, children, and servants.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 82-3.

⁹⁶ 'Reply by Paul Vinion, to the statements of Sir Robt. Mansell', Jan. 1619, TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 27r. Vinion also sent a further petition to Lady Mansell and Bacon, TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 28.

⁹⁷ *APC*, 35, pp. 232-3. Godfrey's analysis of this petition is inaccurate. Despite noting that the glaziers sent a petition to the Council, she argues that they complained of the price of glass under Bungar and Bennett, citing the text of their later petition to parliament in 1621. The petition of 1617 as recorded in the *APC* was against Mansell's monopoly. See Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 87.

Their complaint triggered a response from the Council who called on the Attorney General Sir Henry Yelverton and three aldermen to consider the validity of their suit. By 1617 these glaziers had clearly not made an alliance with Mansell. He would later refer to this petition as a 'needles Complaint.'⁹⁸ The Council did not see it this way; a continued shortage of glass supplies led them to re-issue a licence to Bungard on 6 July 1617 to continue making glass. Mansell's furnaces were described as 'not yet made and settled.'⁹⁹ It could not be clearer that James had granted a patent to an inexperienced courtier, grossly unequipped to manage the trade.

The situation did not improve once Mansell's glass works were erected. In December 1618 the Council informed the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Henry Montagu, that there had been 'much complaint of ill glasse made by theis new workes to the generall prejudice of the subject.'¹⁰⁰ Montagu was to inform Mansell that the Council expected him to provide the realm with only the best glass moving forward. All was clearly not rosy with Mansell's grant.

By the 1620s a new body of authority was created to hear and deal with the myriad complaints against the glass monopoly. In December 1610 James had issued a patent to the Scottish courtier Sir George Hay giving him a monopoly for the making of glass and iron in Scotland for a period of thirty-one years. Hay established glass works at Wemyss in Fife and in Loch Maree.¹⁰¹ Mansell's opponents began to see in these glass works a means of rectifying their problems; they claimed that Hay's glass was of a better quality and requested permission to import it into England.¹⁰² The proclamation of May 1615 had declared that no foreign glass, including from the King's own 'Kingdomes and Dominons' could be imported.¹⁰³ Another proclamation issued in February 1620 reiterated these restrictions.¹⁰⁴ The simultaneous existence of two monopolies for

⁹⁸ TNA, SP 14/105, fo. 26r.

⁹⁹ APC, 35, pp. 290-1.

¹⁰⁰ APC, 36, pp. 329-30.

¹⁰¹ Turnbull, *Scottish Glass*, ch. 4; J. Turnbull, 'Venetian Glassmakers in the Prestonpans Area in the Seventeenth Century', *Scottish Archives*, 23 (2017), p. 106.

¹⁰² Turnbull, *Scottish Glass*, pp. 73-87.

¹⁰³ Larkin and Hughes, I, p. 343.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 464-6.

glass created jurisdictional disputes which could be used by subjects to undermine Mansell.¹⁰⁵ More unruly subjects were accused of working to persuade Mansell's employees to leave his employment, finding better wages and conditions at Hay's glass houses.¹⁰⁶

It was these disputes between both patentees which caused James to appoint a Commission for Glass on 10 January 1620.¹⁰⁷ The Commission was empowered to deal with all disputes which might arise between Hay and Mansell and their assignees. Commissioners were given powers to convene and gather together the patentees, glaziers, and any subjects 'trading and trafficking in glass.'¹⁰⁸ They had authority to examine subjects 'upon oath' and were also entrusted with punishing any who offended against the King's patents or proclamations concerning glass.¹⁰⁹ They had extensive powers to imprison all offenders, or to issue other punishments so long as these were 'agreeable' with James's laws.¹¹⁰ This was in effect a delegation of the royal prerogative, empowering commissioners to enforce the terms of Mansell's patent and to examine and resolve all disputes between patentees.

The Commission was made up of four councillors, two of whom were Scottish and two of whom were English. These were Ludovick Stuart, duke of Lennox, James Hamilton, William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, and Thomas Howard, earl of Arundel.¹¹¹ All were important councillors, but perhaps rather unlikely to favour subjects at the expense of patentees. Lennox was the holder of a controversial patent for the office of alnager allowing him to search and seal cloths for quality.¹¹² Hamilton was a gentleman of the bedchamber, whilst Pembroke had served as lord chamberlain of

¹⁰⁵ These disputes were considered by Caesar in Nov. 1619, see BL, Lans. MS 162, fo. 65r.

¹⁰⁶ For example, see 'Denial by Wm. Ward...that he seduced John Maria dell'Acqua, glassmaker', 1620, TNA, SP 14/112, fo. 46; 'Deposition of Admongesham Pickayes', 20 Jan. 1620, TNA, SP 14/112, fo. 48r; 'Declaration of Jas. Orde', 20 Jan. 1620, TNA, SP 14/112, fo. 49r.

¹⁰⁷ Smedmore MSS, B2/2, in *HMC Smedmore*, pp. 154-6; Turnbull, *Scottish glass*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁸ Smedmore MSS, B2/2, p. 155.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Smedmore MSS, B2/2, p. 154.

¹¹² R. Macpherson, 'Stuart [Stewart], Ludovick, Second Duke of Lennox and Duke of Richmond (1574-1624)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/26724> (6 June 2022).

the household since December 1615.¹¹³ Perhaps most alarming for aggrieved subjects was the presence of Thomas Howard on this commission; he had held shares in the glass patent prior to Mansell's decision to buy out the other patentees. However, Howard was also an important patron of the arts and had already sat on a commission for buildings.¹¹⁴ Of all those appointed, it was he who likely possessed the most knowledge of the glass trade. Appointment to the Commission may have been a form of patronage to these important councillors. They could expect to receive some benefits and gifts as subjects appealed to them for licences, and it offered them the chance to solidify their own networks by granting licences and influencing the terms of this powerful patent.

These commissioners were charged not only with the task of hearing disputes between Hay and Mansell but also with considering complaints surrounding their glass works. This marked an important development in monopoly policy. Whilst other commissions had been appointed to enforce monopoly restrictions, for example the commission to licence starch makers, this Commission was also expected to hear petitions and grievances surrounding Hay and Mansell's grants. James's proclamation of February 1620 publicly announced its creation to the realm, informing subjects that the commissioners had power to issue licences for subjects to import Scottish glass and to punish all who did so without permission.¹¹⁵ It was intended that on all matters at least one English and one Scottish commissioner would sit on judgement to ensure fairness. The commissioners were given power to call before them the realm's glaziers, patentees, and affected artisans and to 'examine upon oath, and to hear and decide and determine... all such questions complaints doubts grievances and controversies' between the patentees or 'between them and other our subjects'.¹¹⁶ It is likely that the King and Council created this body to relieve their own

¹¹³ D. Stevenson, 'Hamilton, James, Second Marquess of Hamilton (1589-1625)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2015), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/12085> (6 June 2022); V. Stater, 'Herbert, William, Third Earl of Pembroke (1580-1630)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/13058> (6 June 2022).

¹¹⁴ R. M. Smuts, 'Howard, Thomas, Fourteenth Earl of Arundel, Fourth Earl of Surrey, and First Earl of Norfolk (1585-1646)', *ODNB* (May, 2015), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/13943> (6 June 2022).

¹¹⁵ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 465-6.

¹¹⁶ Smedmore MSS, B2/2, p. 155.

workload; they had been bombarded with complaints surrounding the industry since its initial monopolisation. The Commission emerged as an important body ensuring the continued enforcement of Mansell's monopoly.¹¹⁷ Its active role is attested to by its appointment of the customs officers Sir John Suckling and Sir John Wolstenholme to assist in the seizure of illegal glass imports.¹¹⁸

The Commission also emerged as an important space for the presentation of petitions as aggrieved subjects took advantage of its existence to protest the glass monopoly. No details as to where and when the Commission sat survive, but subjects actively responded to its appointment. By February 1620, two imprisoned glass sellers in the Marshalsea, Peter Howgill and John Green, petitioned the Privy Council requesting that their suit be referred to the 'Committies for [the] Glasse bussines.'¹¹⁹ Both had been incarcerated for their importation of foreign glass and their decision to ask for a referral of the matter to the new commissioners suggests that knowledge of its existence had spread amongst London's merchants.¹²⁰ By May, another merchant named Thomas Morley petitioned the Commission directly for licence to import a case of glass from Germany.¹²¹ Other subjects petitioned the Commission to complain of the larger effects of Mansell's monopoly. By 12 March an hour-glass maker from London, Ralph Colbourne, complained that the prices of Mansell's glass continued to rise daily, prejudicing him and many others.¹²² He expressed his frustration that he was made to purchase glass from Mansell's glass house in London; the glass sold was not only 'ill' in quality but 'att exteraordinary prizes.'¹²³ Mansell had attempted to channel the majority of trade through his glass works at Broad Street, banning many licenced

¹¹⁷ *APC*, 37, pp. 154-5, 160-1, 201, 220-1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹¹⁹ 'Petition of Peter Howgill and John Greene to the Council', 4 Feb. 1620, TNA, SP 14/112, fo. 108r. They were re-imprisoned after refusing to conform in December, see *APC*, 37, p. 85.

¹²⁰ By March 1620 they were released after sending another petition to the Council, see *APC*, 37, pp. 155-6.

¹²¹ *APC*, 37, p. 195.

¹²² 'Petition of Ralph Colbourne, Hour-glass maker', 12 Mar. 1620, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 48r.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

glassmakers in the realm from selling their glass to London markets.¹²⁴ Colbourne did not call for the cancellation of the grant but requested permission to purchase glass from any other of Mansell's glass houses. Yet his unhappiness with the general tenor of the patent were hinted at as he called on the commissioners to 'restrayne S[i]' Robert Mansell from oppressing his Ma[jes]^{ties} subjects in this manner.'¹²⁵ His request was granted and signed by Secretary Clement Edmondson, suggesting it may have been referred from the commissioners to the Council for further consideration.¹²⁶

The creation of the Commission for Glass marked a changed attitude by the Crown towards anti-monopoly petitioning. It established a new body of authority used by subjects to direct their petitioning complaints. Foster has argued that the Council proved unreceptive to subjects' monopoly concerns, leaving parliament as the only real avenue for the redress of grievances.¹²⁷ Alternatively, this Commission shows that for some subjects, approaching this newly instituted body proved a useful way to regain some agency, allowing them to negotiate the effects of Mansell's monopoly on their own trades and livelihoods. The establishment of the Commission attests to the Crown's awareness that anti-monopoly petitioning was an inevitable feature of public life. Authorities expected that these commissioners would be beset with complaints by subjects. Yet it also demonstrates that they hoped to place the burden of enforcing the monopoly and responding to grievances onto courtiers, who through the potential for patronage this Commission offered them, would be more than willing to do the same.

The Commission for Glass did consider complaints it received, launching an investigation into the quality of Mansell's glass in 1620. Petitions played a central role in this narrative; this investigation had been triggered by a 'Petition exhibited' against Mansell's grant, leading the commissioners to order the King's Glazier and the master, wardens, and assistants of the Glaziers'

¹²⁴ C. Ross, 'The Development of the Glass Industry on the Rivers Tyne and Wear, 1700-1900' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 1982), p. 37.

¹²⁵ TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 48r.

¹²⁶ This decision would be overturned upon a complaint made by Elizabeth Mansell, see *APC*, 37, pp. 342-3.

¹²⁷ Foster, 'Procedure', p. 77.

Company to investigate the quality of his glass.¹²⁸ By 29 March four glaziers named Lionel Bennett, Abaticcek Kirby, Richard Spearman, and John Inman produced their report.¹²⁹ All were important members of the Glaziers' Company; Bennett, Spearman, and Inman were all assistants of the pre-incorporated company and Kirby was a warden.¹³⁰ Bennett was also an active glazier and recorded in the Grocers' Company accounts as their hired glazier from July 1605.¹³¹ The report they offered was rather lukewarm in its findings. They claimed that in the first case of glass they searched, some was 'badd' but that it was 'for the most p[ar]t...reasonable good.'¹³² A second case of glass contained a mixture of good and bad quality glass. Whilst these glaziers did not take the opportunity fully to criticise Mansell's glass they also did not sing its praises.

By contrast a report was also made by Inigo Jones and Thomas Baldwin, the surveyor and comptroller of the King's works, who asserted that much of Mansell's glass was 'very thyn' and that the 'best and worst sorts' were unhelpfully mixed into the same packs.¹³³ Another anonymous report which appears to have been written by an assistant of the Glaziers' Company claimed that a search of glass in the shops of assistants, including those of Bennett, Spearman, and of his own, had found that most of Mansell's glass was 'vnserviceable and for no vse.'¹³⁴ The topic of Mansell's glass clearly divided the company: whilst this assistant declared it to be defective, other assistants had suggested that some of the glass was in a moderate condition.

Jones and Baldwin commented on this discrepancy in their report, noting that many glaziers were not desirous that Mansell's glass be 'reformed, beinge a thinge that will redowne to

¹²⁸ 'Memorandum on glass', 29 Mar. 1620, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 101r.

¹²⁹ 'Report of four glaziers, on Sir Robt. Mansell's glass', 29 Mar. 1620, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 100r.

¹³⁰ Ashdown, *Company of Glaziers*, p. 57; SP 14/113, fo. 101r; G. Lane, 'A World Turned Upside Down: London Glass-Painters 1600-1660', *Journal of Stained Glass*, 29 (2005), p. 49.

¹³¹ GL, CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/009, pp. 148, 229, 312, 355, 401; GL, Grocers' Wardens' Accounts, 1611-1622, CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/010, p. 33.

¹³² TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 100r.

¹³³ 'Certificate by Inigo Jones and Thos. Baldwin', 29 Mar. 1620, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 102r; J. Newman, 'Jones, Inigo (1573-1652), architect and theatre designer', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/15017> (8 Aug. 2022).

¹³⁴ TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 101r.

there benefit as we conceive.¹³⁵ It is therefore possible that some of these glaziers had already moved to begin negotiations with Mansell for an alliance of interests, an alliance which would be solidified by 1621. To condemn his glass would be to place these negotiations in jeopardy. Some glaziers may have recognised that Mansell's monopoly was here to stay, thus attempting to mitigate its effects by reaching a deal with this courtier which would allow them to gain some of the resulting benefits. They may have been promised exclusive rights to buy and sell Mansell's glass, allowing dealers within the Company to control the sale of glass in the city.¹³⁶ By contrast, members who focused more on the actual craft of glazing may have been less likely to support Mansell, aggrieved by the quality of glass he produced. Differences of interest within the Glaziers' Company itself likely led members to adopt different stances. Power relations likely played a part. Jones and Baldwin, as important court figures in charge of the King's buildings and palaces, were less likely than some glaziers to negotiate any deal with Mansell, leaving them freer to adopt a stronger oppositional stance against the patent.

In this Stuart age of incorporation, it is also likely that there was an additional element to this deal; an alliance with Mansell would offer a sure route to achieving an official charter. This was something the Glaziers' Company did not have the resources to fund themselves. In 1606 even the wealthy Grocers' Company spent large amounts of money courting friends, employing legal counsel, and petitioning for a renewal of their charter.¹³⁷ The Glaziers' Company likely desired a charter. By 1637 they would formally petition Charles for a charter, stressing that their lack of formal incorporation hindered them from searching for deceitful glass in the realm.¹³⁸ In March 1616 the Glaziers' Company had already petitioned the Court of Aldermen to complain that many freemen outside of their organisation were practicing the trade of glazing, calling for them to be

¹³⁵ TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 102r.

¹³⁶ Ross, 'Glass Industry', p. 38.

¹³⁷ GL, CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11588/002, pp. 396, 398, 434; CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/009, pp. 146, 150-1; Gadd, "Being like a field", p. 33.

¹³⁸ Oxford, Bodl., MS Bankes 12, fos. 40r-41v.

translated into their company.¹³⁹ Incorporation would allow the glaziers more authority to translate these freemen into the company, whilst providing additional privileges including a legal identity and rights to purchase lands.¹⁴⁰ As an important client of Buckingham, Mansell offered these subjects an entryway into a web of patronage networks. The Commission's investigation had revealed the fissures and divisions in the wider glass industry, as groups adopted different positions on Mansell's monopoly to further their own economic interests.

Unfortunately, no evidence suggests that the Commission moved to act on these reports. This lack of action suggests that its creation was perhaps more of an effort to direct complaints away from king and council, to absorb the demands of complainants, rather than to reform the egregious aspects of the monopoly. On an individual level however, the Commission had offered individuals some respite from Mansell's grant in the form of licences or permission to import materials. The calling of a parliament shortly after its creation saw subjects move to offer collective petitioning complaints to a much more established and powerful institution: parliament.

In 1621, James called his first parliament since the 'Addled Parliament' of 1614, triggered once again by his need for money.¹⁴¹ The outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and concurrent onset of a general economic depression in Europe provided the immediate backdrop to this session.¹⁴² James needed supply to assist in the Palatinate. As such, discussion of foreign policy and the decay of trade dominated the affairs of this parliament. Concerns with the economy naturally led to the discussion of monopolies and patents.¹⁴³ Numerous subjects, troubled by the

¹³⁹ LMA, COL/CA/01/01/036, fo. 259v.

¹⁴⁰ Gadd, "Being like a field", p. 36.

¹⁴¹ For details of this parliament, see Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, ch. 2.

¹⁴² For depression see Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, ch. 3.

¹⁴³ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 99.

proliferation of patents and suffering from the effects of trade depression and unemployment, turned to parliament for redress.

James's dire financial straits meant he could not truly afford to cancel monopolies. Russell has argued that the English financial system was on the verge of a breakdown.¹⁴⁴ In this context, monopolies would not be cancelled as the Crown could simply not afford to reward its officials or run efficiently: only through a thorough reform of the financial system would monopolies become a thing of the past.¹⁴⁵ James's need for supply meant that parliament did have some leverage to discuss grievances, leaving MPs relatively free to pursue their investigation of monopolies.¹⁴⁶ Numerous monopolies were discussed and challenged in the first session of this parliament as the Commons moved to investigate the outbreak of fiscal abuses. Bellany and Cogswell have estimated that as many as a hundred were scrutinised.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the most significant were those associated with members of the Villiers' faction. Strong attacks were made against the patentees Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell, associates of Buckingham, for their rigorous enforcement of patents for the sole production of gold and silver thread and for the licencing of alehouses.¹⁴⁸ In a letter written shortly before the parliament in November 1620, Francis Bacon warned Buckingham that patents for inns and alehouses were a source of rumour and discussion 'both by the vulgar and by the gentlemen.'¹⁴⁹ The investigations into these grants combined concerns with their economic effects with larger anxieties surrounding court corruption.¹⁵⁰ As parliament worked to punish both the unpopular patentees and the referees who had supported grants, the Lords even

¹⁴⁴ C. Russell, 'Baseline (Trevelyan I)', in idem, *King James VI and I and his English Parliaments*, ed. R. Cust and A. Thrush (Oxford, 2011), p. 3

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, p. 100; C. Russell, 'What was New in the 1620s? (Trevelyan VI)' in *King James VI and His English Parliaments*, pp. 183-5. Russell argues that this parliament witnessed no constitutional conflict. By contrast, Zaller argues for the existence of a constitutional crisis, see Zaller, *The Parliament of 1621: A Study in Constitutional Conflict* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 1-4.

¹⁴⁷ A. Bellany and T. Cogswell, *The Murder of King James I* (New Haven, 2016), pp. 116-18.

¹⁴⁸ M. A. Abrams, 'The English Gold and Silver Thread Monopolies, 1611-1621', *Journal of Economic and Business History*, 3:3 (May, 1931), pp. 382-406; Zaller, *Parliament of 1621*, pp. 56-86.

¹⁴⁹ J. Spedding (ed.), *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon* (7 vols, London, 1874), vii, p. 148.

¹⁵⁰ Peck, *Court Patronage*.

revived their ancient powers of impeachment.¹⁵¹ Significantly, it was in this parliament that an 'Act against monopoly' was first introduced in the Commons, marking an important attempt to render monopolies as illegal. Although it was rejected at this stage by the Lords, the Statute of Monopolies passed in 1624 was heavily based on this earlier bill.¹⁵²

Whilst it may not have been obviously associated to the Villiers' faction, the glass monopoly also received much attention in this session. Many glassmakers embraced the opportunities offered by the calling of parliament. Members of glassmaking families including the Bungards, Henseys, and Tysacks proffered collective supplications to challenge Mansell's monopoly in the Commons. The general anti-monopoly mood of the House was likely a factor triggering subjects to turn to parliament. Whilst the Commission for Glass was an arm of the Council charged with ensuring that Hay and Mansell's patents were enforced, the Commons was a more independent body who had for some time made their position on monopolies clear.

One of parliament's primary functions was conceived of being for the 'procuring and obteyninge of Remedye' from grievances, facilitated by the freedom of debate it enjoyed.¹⁵³ It offered a safer space for subjects to communicate grievances than did other arenas, where discussion of discontent could 'woorke murmurr and alienation of myndes.'¹⁵⁴ Whilst the King invited his subjects to petition him 'in Parliam[en]t or out of Parliament', subjects assembled in the Commons could articulate grievances for the whole realm, not having to limit themselves to discussion of matters which only affected their particular stations.¹⁵⁵ This encouraged subjects to be bold, presenting their suits to a body which was capable and willing to articulate the grievances of the commonwealth directly to the Crown. Parliament was also perceived as an important space

¹⁵¹ Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, pp. 103-15.

¹⁵² Zaller, *Parliament of 1621*, pp. 126-30.

¹⁵³ CP 129/26, fo. 26r.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, fos. 26r-v

for the punishment and removal of evil counsellors and monopolists.¹⁵⁶ By petitioning this body, subjects could aid in this process.

Larger institutional and technological changes facilitated petitioning activity. The development of standing committees offered a cheaper and quicker means for subjects to gain redress than the usual expensive and tiresome process of proceeding by bill.¹⁵⁷ The chairmen of these committees did not charge for introducing petitions, removing costs usually incurred for paying the Speaker or Clerk of either House to introduce bills.¹⁵⁸ In 1621 various standing committees were formed including a committee for trade, for justice, and for general grievances. That for grievances emerged as a particularly receptive space for the hearing of petitions. By 12 March it had been presented with a staggering 80 petitions.¹⁵⁹ It offered a (clearly widely publicised) means for subjects to have their concerns discussed in the House without the need to incur the costs and access usually necessary for the lobbying and formal petitioning process.¹⁶⁰ This was especially useful for the realm's glassmakers who were not incorporated into a body possessing the resources necessary to conduct such a campaign. Such was the extent of petitioning activity in this session that the Commons appointed a subcommittee of six members of the House to vet all petitions, an important procedural development which would be repeated in 1624.¹⁶¹

Many of the petitions and notes pertaining to the examination of the glass monopoly in this parliament are preserved in the papers of two MPs: Sir Robert Phelps and Edward Alford. Phelps was a representative for Bath and was especially interested in the monopolies issue; he actively worked to ensure the punishment of the notorious patentee Mompesson in this session.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷ Thrush, 'Legislation and Petitions'; Kyle, *Theater*, p. 142.

¹⁵⁸ Thrush, 'Legislation and Petitions.'

¹⁵⁹ Kyle, *Theater*, p. 142.

¹⁶⁰ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, p. 277.

¹⁶¹ Thrush, 'Legislation and Petitions'.

¹⁶² T. G. Barnes, 'Phelips, Sir Robert (1586?-1638)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22090> (26 July 2021); A. Davidson, J. P. Ferris and S. Healy, 'Phelips, Sir Robert (1585/6-1638)', *HoP*, I, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/phelips-sir-robert-15856-1638> (26 July 2021).

Phelips was an active MP, delivering over 200 recorded speeches to the House.¹⁶³ His collection of documents on the glass monopoly attests to his interest in the case. He appears to have worked strongly to reform corruption amongst judges and the abuses of numerous patentees.¹⁶⁴ His close documentation of the glass case appears to have derived from his larger political concerns with abuses of the royal prerogative.

Petitions were also preserved in the papers of Alford, MP for Colchester in 1614 and 1621.¹⁶⁵ Like Phelips, he remained a staunch opponent of monopolies and any undue extensions of the royal prerogative.¹⁶⁶ Alford also had strong ties to his native homeland of Sussex, one of the oldest centres of glassmaking in the realm.¹⁶⁷ His local affiliations likely caused him to be sympathetic to the glassmakers so touched in this area. Millstone has noted that many manuscript tracts describing parliamentary proceedings in the 1620s tended to focus on key areas of debate, for example the Spanish Match. This often created a bias in circulated manuscript materials in favour of such contentious issues to the neglect of other types of business such as the consideration of statutes or private bills.¹⁶⁸ The inclusion of papers pertaining to glass in both MPs' papers demonstrates that economic debates were also circulated and copied.

A collective petition against Mansell's monopoly was first presented by 69 glassmakers, glaziers, merchants, and bugle makers.¹⁶⁹ Heading the supplication were five named glassmakers: Isaac Bungard, John Worrall, Paul Vinion, Peter Vinion, and Abraham Lisco. Bungard, Lisco, and Paul Vinion were staunch and active opponents of Mansell's monopoly; Lisco and Bungard had been imprisoned for their rejection of Mansell's grant and as recently as 7 February Bungard had faced

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ R. Zaller, 'Alford, Edward (1565/6-1631/2)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/37106> (26 July 2021).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ A. Thrush, 'Alford, Edward (c. 1565/6-1631)', *HoP*, I, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/alford-edward-15656-1631> (26 July 2021).

¹⁶⁸ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, pp. 113-14.

¹⁶⁹ 'Petition to the Commons of numerous glassmakers', 1621, SRO, DD/PH/222/100, fo. 177r; *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 540-1.

incarceration for uttering ‘disgracefull speeches’ against Mansell.¹⁷⁰ As noted, Bungard had been an important glassmaker in the Weald and an owner of lands in Sussex; he was certainly not a poor glassmaker but an active producer in the industry.¹⁷¹ Worrall was also a glassmaker who claimed to have been instructed in the art under Bowes’s patent.¹⁷² The list of subscribed names to their appeal suggests that support for their suit was widespread; this was a collective supplication issued by more than a few disgruntled glassmakers. Subjects from disaffected families who had long practiced the trade were listed as petitioners, including three members of the Strudwick family who had made glass in the parish of Kirdford in the Weald from the late medieval period.¹⁷³ Interestingly, some members of the Glaziers’ Company were even listed as petitioners, including company assistants Lionel Bennett and John Dines. The master of the Company, John Markes, was also listed as a petitioner.¹⁷⁴ Other London based glaziers including Robert Parsons and Richard Sadler, named as assistants of the Glaziers’ Company in the report produced for the glass Commission in March 1620, were also petitioners.¹⁷⁵ Even the King’s own glazier Thomas Bagley joined the suit.¹⁷⁶

In form the petition consisted of two main folios: the first an opening address summarising their main complaints and the second a list of twenty annexed articles describing the manifold inconveniences caused by Mansell’s patent. The beginning address offers a masterful example of the ability for petitioners to shape their supplications to appeal to the specific recipient addressed. The glassmakers, glaziers, and merchants shaped this section around a narrative designed to appeal to the issue of parliamentary authority. They began by noting the Commons’ condemnation of the glass patent in 1614. ‘At the last Assembly for the last p[ar]liament’ they reminded MPs that ‘vpon

¹⁷⁰ *APC*, 37, p. 343.

¹⁷¹ Charleston, ‘Vessel Glass’, p. 245.

¹⁷² ‘Petition of John Worrall, on behalf of himself and other glass makers’, c. 1621, TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 227r.

¹⁷³ Kenyon, *Glass Industry*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷⁴ An adverse character statement of these petitioners describes him as a current master, see ‘Adverse character studies of the principal petitioners against the glass patent’, SRO, DD/PH/222/103, fo. 181r.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 101r.

¹⁷⁶ SRO, DD/PH/222/103, fo. 181r.

full hearing and mature deliberac[i]on' the patent for glass was adjudged a 'Patent of Monopoly' and found to be both 'grievous and prejudicial to the Comon Wealth.'¹⁷⁷ In direct 'contempt of the Judgement of that greate Counsell' and upon 'vntrue suggestion to his Ma[jes]tie', a new patent had since been procured creating a 'Monopoly of like nature.'¹⁷⁸ As a result some subjects had been threatened, some imprisoned, and others 'restrayned from vsing their trades wherein they were bredd.'¹⁷⁹ The petitioners thus called on the House to consider their last condemnation of the patent, the proceedings of which remained 'vpon record with the Clerke of this Ho[nora]ble House.'¹⁸⁰ The petitioners tactically appealed to parliament's past decisions to suggest that Mansell's grant had been procured in direct defiance of their judgement and under false pretences. By beginning their suit by appealing directly to parliamentary authority, the petitioners attempted to ensure that their annexed articles would receive attention alongside their previous recorded objections, whilst appealing to the sensibilities of MPs. The glassmakers therefore took advantage of the opportunities provided by the summoning of parliament, and the mood of various MPs to challenge the Crown's prerogative powers in relation to monopolies, to address the Commons.

Included in their petition was a list of twenty annexed articles. In Phelips' copy numerous points were underlined, visibly demonstrating his careful analysis of the suit.¹⁸¹ A copy of the supplication exists in Alford's papers and is nearly identical in contents, suggesting that both are likely to be quite true to the original document.¹⁸² The demands articulated included numerous lamentations on the effects of the monopoly drawn from different interests in the trade, attesting to the collective nature of the supplication. The petitioners criticised the ban on imports of foreign and Scottish glass as negatively affecting James's customs. They also suggested that the prices of

¹⁷⁷ SRO, DD/PH/222/100, fo. 177r.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ 'Articles of objections', 1621, SRO, DD PH/222/101,102, fos. 178r-179r.

¹⁸² 'Articles of obieccions', 1621, Harleian 6847, in *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 541-5. The only difference in this copy is that articles four and five are swapped round, and the copy in the Phelips papers contains an additional detail pertaining to the Commission for Glass in its final point, see below.

glass had increased; Venice drinking glasses had risen from thirteen shillings a dozen to as much as sixteen shillings a dozen. The thirteenth demand expressed concerns held by the realm's glaziers that Mansell's glass was sent to them 'already cutt', causing the 'vndoing of the poore Glassiers, a maine p[ar]te of whose gaine was the cutting of such Glasse.'¹⁸³ The concerns of glass sellers and merchants were also included in the petitioners' fourteenth demand which complained that merchants purchasing glass for sale in London frequently had their goods seized. Finally, the nineteenth demand seems to have been included by disaffected bugle makers who complained of the limits imposed on the importation of coloured glass. The petition thus included a multitude of concerns drawn from different sectors of the industry.

The petitioners continued to appeal to the issue of parliamentary authority. The second article thus repeated their initial complaint that Mansell's patent had been 'procured in abuse of the late ho[nora]ble Assembly of the house of Comons.'¹⁸⁴ The petitioners also suggested that Mansell's patent had been granted with a blatant disregard for acceptable petitioning procedures. It had been bestowed 'without any reference made to the Comissioners for Suites', the Commission appointed in 1618 to consider supplications for projects and other matters of trade.¹⁸⁵ By ignoring official procedure Mansell's grant had been passed without the hearing of any 'reasons and obiecc[i]ons which might iusly have bene made against it'.¹⁸⁶ The Commission for Suits was clearly regarded by these petitioners as an important space where petitions were scrutinised and witnesses called, providing subjects with an opportunity to voice their opinions before projects were passed. The petitioners also offered an attack on Mansell himself. In a clear reference to his condemnation of monopolies in 1614 they expressed their confusion that those who were 'violent opposers' of the glass monopoly in the last parliament had now emerged as patentees.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ SRO, DD/PH/222/101,102, fo. 179r.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., fo. 178r.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 31r-32r.

¹⁸⁶ SRO, DD/PH/222/101,102, fo. 178r.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The glassmakers and glaziers went even further in their attempts to appeal to the Commons, moving beyond a focus on the Commons' authority and the necessity of just processes. Significantly, they demonstrated a knowledge of the sentiments of the House on the issue of free trade. James's first parliament had witnessed debates surrounding the introduction of free trade in overseas trades and corporations. The issue of corporate restrictions once again became a key topic of discussion in 1621 as the realm grappled with an economic depression which severely affected the cloth industry.¹⁸⁸ Aware of these developments the petitioners complained that Mansell and his deputies had created a restricted 'circuit' of trade through their strict controls on glass buying and selling, causing 'the overthrowing of the free trading which ought to be in the kingdome.'¹⁸⁹ This appears to have been a sentiment intended to rouse the indignation of those MPs who called for a loosening of trading restrictions.¹⁹⁰ The petitioners even attempted to appeal to James by suggesting that prohibitions on imports of Scottish glass were a direct threat to the 'treatye of comon commerce betweene the kingdomes of England, Scotland, and Ireland.'¹⁹¹ These points were clearly intended to capture the attention of the Commons, presenting the struggles faced by glassmakers within larger frameworks designed to appeal to the perceived sentiments of the House.

The petitioners also engaged with another issue which Mansell himself had focused on to justify his patent: the employment of native subjects over strangers and aliens. This was a particularly contentious topic in the early 1620s. The depression had triggered a large degree of unemployment and tensions between English-born and immigrant subjects had risen.¹⁹² In London, a Commission for Aliens was established in August 1621 to hear and consider the complaints of

¹⁸⁸ See ch. 4.

¹⁸⁹ SRO, DD/PH/222/101, 102, fo. 179v.

¹⁹⁰ Calls for 'free trade' in this period did not wish for an end to corporate regulation but for a loosening of restrictions to enter these companies, see ch. 4.

¹⁹¹ The Phelips' manuscript is damaged here, see *CD 1621*, vii, p. 542.

¹⁹² Ole Peter Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in Early Stuart London: the Dutch Church in Austin Friars, 1603-1642* (Leiden, 1989), ch. 4; I. Scouloudi, 'Alien Immigration into, and Alien Communities in, London, 1558-1640', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, xvi (1937-41), pp. 27-49; L. B. Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700* (Ashgate, 2005), ch. 5.

companies on the involvement of foreigners in various industries.¹⁹³ The petitioners complained in their eighth article that Mansell and his assignees 'employ in their glassemaking for the most p[ar]te Strangers' being of 'base and Lewd condic[i]on.'¹⁹⁴ As such subjects who had served their apprenticeships and who had been born and bred in the glass trade were pushed out of their livelihoods. Much as in the cases of Darcy and the starch makers, the issue of the ability for men to practice their lawful labours was placed at the centre of objections surrounding this monopoly. Yet whilst the Leathersellers' and Grocers' Companies had focused on the importance of the custom of London for providing freemen with the right to trade, the glassmakers instead reorientated this issue around that of alien versus native employment, in what must be seen as a clear response to contextual circumstances. Indeed there was some truth to their claims. Mansell frequently used his agent Howell to employ foreign glassmakers in his glass houses.¹⁹⁵ In their eleventh demand the petitioners complained that even if they could find employment under Mansell this was upon harsh and intolerable conditions.

The petitioners ended their powerful and multifaceted appeal by once again targeting parliament, presenting the Commons as their last hope to achieve redress. They claimed that

The Patentees are so powerfull, as els[e] where no relief can be expected. The lords Comissioners apoynted by his Ma[jes]tie for examinac[i]on of all greevances and injuries comitted by this Patent, having refused to deale with any thing that may question the validity of the same.¹⁹⁶

Their decision to approach parliament as opposed to the Commission for Glass was presented as a necessity; the Commission was ultimately too biased and too focused on enforcing Mansell's patent to offer them a reasonable chance of securing redress. Mansell himself was also too

¹⁹³ 'Petition of the City of London to the King, complaining of the loss incurred by aliens...', June 1621, TNA, SP 14/121, fo. 269; 'Petition of Leatherdressers of Southwark to Sir Robert Heath', Jan. 1622, TNA, SP 14/127, fo. 30; 'Petition of the Dyers of London to the Commissioners for relief of handicraftsmen', Sept. 1622, TNA, SP 14/133, fo. 4.

¹⁹⁴ SRO, DD/PH/222/101,102, fo. 178r.

¹⁹⁵ Clark, *Some Account of Sir Robert Mansel*, pp. 21-2.

¹⁹⁶ SRO, DD/PH/222/101,102, fo. 179r.

powerful to challenge. They further complained that their lawful rights to petition had been restricted by the patentee, who used threats of imprisonment if any one attempted to proffer petitions against him. The petitioners thus saw in this parliament, concerned as it was with monopolies, economic depression, and unemployment, an opportunity to secure a revocation of Mansell's grant.

Much like in the 'Addled Parliament', the presentation of this petition triggered an investigation into the validity of Mansell's patent. Sir Thomas Barrington recorded in his diary that arguments for and against the grant were articulated in the grievances committee.¹⁹⁷ In terms of procedure, the committee often considered anti-monopoly petitions before summoning patentees and complainants to appear before it with evidence and testimonies.¹⁹⁸ It is thus likely that other members of the Glaziers' Company were invited to offer their opinions on Mansell's grant. It was at this point that many glaziers changed their tune on the same, moving against those in their company such as Bennett and Dines who had joined in the petitioning effort against Mansell. Previously glaziers had been either opposers of the grant or at best lukewarm in their conclusions on the quality of glass Mansell produced. By 1621 some members of the Glaziers' Company launched a three-pronged attack to authority petitioning parliament, Commission, and council to express their support for Mansell. It is likely that this was a product of the negotiations and deals made between Mansell and some glaziers in 1620.

Elizabeth Mansell also played an important part in these affairs. During this parliamentary session Mansell was absent from the realm on naval business in Algiers. Elizabeth took over the administration of the patent in his place. A breviat of the case in Phelips' papers commented that Elizabeth

¹⁹⁷ *CD 1621*, iii, pp. 255-8.

¹⁹⁸ Foster, 'Procedure', pp. 67, 70.

hath made noe excuse or delay but redely attended the Summons this hono[ra]^{ble} howse of parliam[en]^t: Willingly comendinge the Justices of her cawse to the censure of soe many grave & hono[ra]^{ble} Judges.¹⁹⁹

Even contemporaries recognised the active role played by Elizabeth to defend the glass monopoly. In 1621, Elizabeth had written to Secretary Edmondess on the imprisonment of Bungard in the Marshalsea, requesting that he be released only upon signing a bond to be 'conformable to his magistries patent.'²⁰⁰ Godfrey has suggested that Elizabeth was even prepared to issue threats to avoid parliamentary opposition. On hearing that the King's glazier Bagley was planning to testify in parliament in favour of Hay's Scottish glass, Elizabeth threatened him with the loss of his position.²⁰¹ Whilst Godfrey suggests that this was enough to prevent Bagley testifying, it was clearly not enough to prevent him from signing the collective petition against Mansell.²⁰²

Some members of the Glaziers' Company therefore moved, in direct opposition to their brethren, to petition the Commons in support of Mansell's patent. Heretofore unnoticed is a copy of a petition in Phelips' manuscripts directed to the Commons from 'our selves and other glassiers of the City of London who use most glass.'²⁰³ The petition was subscribed by a total of forty-two glaziers, some of whom are identifiable as members of the unincorporated London Glaziers. The warden John Bargeman was listed as a petitioner, as well as two assistants, John Inman and Abacurke Kirby, who had signed the report on Mansell's glass in March 1620 alongside Bennett and Spearman. Clearly this was an issue which had caused a public inter-company rift. These glaziers used their petition to provide an explanation for their sudden reversal to support Mansell's patent, and indeed, for the divisions created in their company by the same. They thus moved to construct an elaborate narrative which focused heavily on the actions of Bennett and Bungard and which

¹⁹⁹ 'Breviate of case on behalf of Lady Mansell', SRO, DD/PH/222/106, fo. 184r.

²⁰⁰ 'Elizabeth Lady Mansell to Sir Clement Edmondess', c. 1621, TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 229r.

²⁰¹ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 106.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ 'Copy petition of named glaziers of the City of London', 1621, SRO, DD/PH/222/104, 105, fos. 182r-183r.

drew on the concepts of faction and self-interest which were so dominant in political culture.²⁰⁴ The glaziers were aware that they could not ignore or skirt over their previous condemnation of Mansell's monopoly in 1614. They therefore addressed the issue head on by acknowledging that they had been 'suters to that hono[ra]ble assembly' against Zouch's patent.²⁰⁵ Drawing on concepts of engrossment and of illegitimate petitioning campaigns, they presented themselves as having been duped into joining this opposition campaign.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, it was common for patentees to undermine petitions presented against them by complaining that they were the product of malicious petitioning practices spearheaded by seditious individuals. Here, however, the glaziers themselves used this rhetoric to excuse their own previous supplicatory activity. They thus claimed that 'in former tymes we fownde our selves much oppressed by Isaacke bungar and Lionell bennett brethering of our Company' both of whom were accused of having engrossed all glass supplies from Sussex, selling it to London based glaziers at excessive rates of 22 shillings and 6 pence per case.²⁰⁶ The glaziers claimed to have been 'Impoverished' by the actions of Bungard and Bennett before the granting of any glass monopolies. Both had monopolised the London glass market and supplied glaziers with expensive glass of a poor quality. These greedy engrossers had organised the petitioning opposition against Zouch's monopoly in 1614, determined to maintain their own stronghold over the trade. On account of their scheming machinations, the glaziers had been 'p[er]swaided by the said p[ar]ties Ingrossers that if...the pattenties should p[e]vaile in their designe then wee should be tirannized over.'²⁰⁷ This fear-mongering had caused them to 'joine wit[h] them in their said Complaint' believing it better to 'Suffer an Inconvenience then a mischeife.'²⁰⁸ This, they explained, was why they had petitioned against Zouch's patent in 1614. Yet

²⁰⁴ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, ch. 7. For the issues of faction, self-interest, and court corruption in society see Bellany, *Court Scandal*, pp. 16, 21.

²⁰⁵ SRO, DD/PH/222/104, 105, fo. 182r.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* There is no evidence to suggest that Bungard was actually a member of the Glaziers' Company in 1621, though Bennett certainly was.

²⁰⁷ SRO, DD/PH/222/104, 105, fo. 182r.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

on the granting of Mansell's patent they had seen that they were better served by the courtier patentee than they had been by the Bungard-Bennett alliance. The petitioners presented themselves as having, in effect, seen the light and arriving at a new awareness of the oppression they had faced. They thus celebrated the 'Comfortable protection' afforded to them by Mansell's patent, allowing them to have glass at 'better Rates' and to maintain their families.²⁰⁹

The petitioners seemed to anticipate that questions might be asked as to why sixty-nine glass makers, glaziers, and merchants were by contrast petitioning parliament against Mansell's grant. They suggested that it was likely that Bennett, Bungar, and Dines had been the 'setters on and p[ro]curers of such others as have subscribed to the said petic[i]on', much as they had been in 1614.²¹⁰ They took their attack even further by suggesting

Many have bin the devices practices and attemptes both secret and open whereby they have endeavoured to Ruine and overthrow the same which malice of theires wee are well assured tendeth but to theire owne ends and to opresse and bring vs vnder their bondage and Slavery in which they have held vs Longe before the tyme of the pattent.²¹¹

Here the glaziers presented Bungard, Bennett, and Dines as the real monopolists, describing their supplications as merely one example of the 'practices' and 'devices' used to regain their monopoly hold over the glass industry. They presented these men as heading a self-interested faction intent on monopolising the industry, thus engaging with a rhetoric prominent in larger court and popular discourses to discount the petitioning opposition levied against them. As Millstone has argued, the language of faction was widespread and especially 'malleable'.²¹² Glaziers here applied this language to an economic issue to discount the activities of Bungard and Bennett.

The glaziers continued by issuing a list of objections to the chief points made within the glassmakers' petition, suggesting that they crafted their response upon reading a copy of the

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Millstone, 'Politic History', p. 173.

supplication, likely provided to them by the committee. They claimed that Mansell's glass was 'generally as good or Rather better Cheape' than that which they had previously received from the glassmakers.²¹³ Significantly, they also presented themselves as representing the case of the 'Cuntry glaziers.'²¹⁴ Mansell's monopoly meant that glaziers throughout the realm were supplied with good quality glass from a variety of glass houses but that this did mean that London 'is prevented of that benefit of trading as Formerly it hath hadd' when London glaziers controlled the market and glass was produced largely in the Weald.²¹⁵ The implication was clear; the glaziers and glassmakers petitioning against Mansell's grant were lamenting the collapse of their own monopoly hold over the trade, despite the patent positively benefitting a multitude of subjects across the realm. The glaziers here undermined any notion that Bungard and Bennett were the authoritative voice on the state of the industry. Instead, they merely sought to serve their own interests and not those of the wider commonwealth. They also suggested that those glaziers who opposed Mansell were most likely aggrieved that glass was now sent to London pre-cut, the cutting of glass being a way many had made their fortunes. Of course, though, they failed to note that they stood to monopolise the retail of glass from these changes. They ended their petition by calling on parliament to ensure that 'wee may not fall vnder the Scottish pattent', whilst calling for Mansell's grant to 'continue in the same Force it dooth.'²¹⁶ Hay's patent had not even been mentioned by the glassmakers in their petition to the House. Here, Elizabeth Mansell likely used the glaziers as a mouthpiece, encouraging them to criticise Hay's Scottish glass to undermine arguments made throughout the dispute that his glass was of a better quality.

The petitioners even publicly acknowledged the split caused in their industry by the monopoly as they stressed their desire 'to bee vnder the pattent' then under 'danger of Combinac[i]on by som[e] of our owne Fraternitie', again engaging with a rhetoric of faction and

²¹³ SRO, DD/PH/222/104, 105, fo. 183r.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

duplicity.²¹⁷ However, despite campaigning strongly for Mansell, the end of their supplication provides a sense of the fragility of their alliance and their anxiety that this courtier might not keep to his side of their underhand agreement. The glaziers thus called for the Commission for Glass to continue to exist as a space to hear 'and Relleve our Complaintes in Case of necessitie.'²¹⁸

The move of some glaziers to support Mansell's monopoly did not escape the attention of parliamentary diarists who attempted to understand why this issue had split the industry. John Pym observed that rising glass prices seemed to have affected London less than areas such as Gloucestershire, though he suggested that this was because glaziers closer to the court were better 'neare the Cownsell to Complayne.'²¹⁹ Another diarist suggested that London glaziers were well supplied with cheap glass whilst those elsewhere complained of excessive prices.²²⁰ Regional divisions may have played a part. Mansell's glass works in Broad Street likely supplied Londoners with a consistent supply of glass, whilst subjects further from his works may have found it more difficult to procure supplies. Mansell's decision to channel most of the trade through Broad Street likely negatively affected the glass industry in the provinces. Observers were clearly trying to understand the divisions in the industry occasioned by the patent and the sudden support shown by many of London's glaziers for the grant. Whilst this second diarist hinted that London's glaziers benefited from supplies of cheaper glass, neither of these contemporaries appear to have been aware of the potential deal made between monopolist and artisan which also explains the divergent opinions on Mansell's monopoly within the city.

Whilst the glaziers worked to stress their support for Mansell's patent, Elizabeth also appears to have been attempting to rally support amongst MPs for her husband's cause. Phelps possessed a manuscript breviatè concerning 'the Lady Mansells cawse touchinge the Pattent of glasse.'²²¹ It was endorsed with a note that this account of the business was 'for S[i]r Rob[er]t

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ *CD 1621*, iv, p. 353.

²²⁰ *CD 1621*, v, p. 122.

²²¹ SRO, DD/PH/222/106, fo. 184r.

Phillips.²²² It is possible that Phelips' strong interest in this case caused him to request this breviat, containing as it did details on the particulars of Mansell's grant. It provided a list of 'proofes' as to the validity of the patent, arguing that Mansell had been the first successful inventor of coal to make glass and that his patent had been found good on the testimony of numerous glaziers and glassmakers.²²³ Only by understanding its history could Phelips properly scrutinise and investigate the same. It is also possible that Elizabeth herself was working behind the scenes to garner the support of MPs she knew were outspoken against monopolies, taking advantage of this burgeoning manuscript culture to circulate texts justifying Mansell's monopoly.

As part of their three-pronged campaign to authority, the Mansell group of glaziers also turned to two other spaces to express their support for his grant: the Privy Council and the Commission for Glass. This was clearly a concerted and extensive opposition campaign. In April 1621 they thus moved to send a certificate to the Council which rehearsed many of the same arguments contained in their address to the Commons.²²⁴ The certificate was signed by numerous freemen and glaziers including company members Bargeman, Inman, and Kirby. Marks were also left on the same by illiterate glaziers. This certificate stressed to the Council that they were content with the 'price, Goodnes, and Store' of Mansell's glass.²²⁵ They also repeated their claims that the Bungard-Bennett faction were the real monopolisers of the glass industry, engrossing all stores of glass into their own hands and selling it at inflated prices. They thus claimed to be 'fearfull to fale to our former Subiection to persons of our owne fraternity who have Terinized over us.'²²⁶

Their certificate was joined with another petition, this time directed to the Commission for Glass.²²⁷ Clearly the Commission was still regarded as an important space to direct complaints even when parliament was sitting. On 15 April, the glaziers presented their petition to the Commission

²²² *Ibid.*, fo. 184v.

²²³ *Ibid.*, fo. 184r.

²²⁴ 'Glasiers' certificatt', 15 Apr. 1621, SP 14/120; 71, in *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 545-6.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 546.

²²⁷ 'Glasiers' Petition', 15 Apr. 1621, SP 14/120; 89, in *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 546-9.

which was signed by forty-nine individuals, including those who had signed their certificate. It repeated the narrative that Bungard's faction had worked to place subjects under a 'most cruell oppression.'²²⁸ Once again Bungard and Bennett were presented as the leaders of this faction and accused of having worked to engross all glass supplies in Sussex to create artificial scarcities through their 'Cunge practises and devices.'²²⁹ They hoped to place the London glaziers into 'bondage and slavery' and commissioners were called upon to ensure that 'wee fall not into the handes of such unnaturall brethren.'²³⁰ Once again the parliamentary petition of Bungard and the other glassmakers was undermined as merely an 'uniust, causeless, and slanderous bill or position consistinge of 19 articles.'²³¹ By appealing to parliament, council, and the Commission, these London glaziers demonstrated their anxiety with the strength of the glassmakers' petition. Responding to it only via a counter-petition to the committee for grievances was clearly not seen as weighty enough to ensure that Mansell's patent was not adjudged a monopoly. These glaziers may have believed that the Council and Commission were likely to be more receptive to their complaints than the Commons, thus desperately attempting to harness support in the face of parliamentary opposition. What is clear is that their counter-petition included more than just simple articles of objections but was based around a carefully constructed narrative drawing on the themes of engrossment, self-interest, faction, and monopoly.

A final and hitherto overlooked aspect of the glaziers' counter-petitioning campaign came in the form of a list of adverse character statements contained in Phelips' papers. Whilst the document is anonymous a reference to it within the breviat circulated by Elizabeth suggests that this was part of the larger counter-petitioning campaign.²³² It was circulated amongst MPs to persuade them of the 'demeanors' of the petitioners who opposed Mansell's patent.²³³ It even

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 547.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 547-8.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² SRO, DD/PH/222/106, fo. 184.

²³³ SRO, DD/PH/222/103, fo. 180r.

contained some of Phelps' own marginal annotations, suggesting his active engagement with the text. The breviat continued the theme of faction and engrossment, reading primarily as a document intended to reveal the self-interested machinations of the various petitioners. It thus resembled the type of allegedly 'secret report' so common in manuscript culture of this period, which were thought to allow subjects to unearth the secret plots believed to be prevalent in political culture.²³⁴ Through reading this character statement, MPs could gather information allowing them to unveil the real intentions of the Bungard faction.

The statement began by attacking Bungard. It made direct reference to his 'malicious p[er]secuc[i]on the last p[ar]liam[en]t' painting his opposition as particularly villainous given that he had received much 'kind usadge and enterteynement' at Mansell's hands.²³⁵ Despite being offered wages of £200 and permission from the Council to use up his wood supplies, Bungard had still persuaded subjects to break their contracts with Mansell. Other glassmakers including John Worrall and Abraham Liscourt were similarly criticised for having persuaded workers to join Hay's Scottish glassworks. The statement also made direct reference to the petitioning campaign in the Commons in both 1614 and 1621. The document claimed that Bungard had

Travailed & searched out all sedicious, malicious, discontented, irreguler p[er]sons, that are to be found in any p[ar]te of the kingdome, to clamour to the Lords, and the former p[ar]liam[en]t, and in the like maner are his p[ro]ceedings at this p[re]sent to this ho[nora]ble Assembly.²³⁶

His ability to procure support for his campaign was the result of the existence of an interlocked web of glassmakers, each of whom were either Bungard's kin or dependent on him. Bungard was thus presented as a disruptive subject who had worked to destroy the 'purposes of the king, and State in this kinde.'²³⁷

²³⁴ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, p. 164.

²³⁵ SRO, DD/PH/222/103, fo. 180r.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, fo. 180v.

Other glassmakers were also attacked including Liscourt, who was accused of trying to 'kill and mayme div[er]s men' who had attempted to teach English subjects the art of glassmaking.²³⁸ The authors of the statement had clearly gone to great pains to unearth information pertaining to these individuals; they claimed that Liscourt's father had murdered a man named Balthazar Henzey in Lorraine for teaching Englishmen to make glass. Abraham's father, Christopher, had indeed committed a murder in 1579 though the precise motivations for the attack are unclear.²³⁹ Ultimately it was these machinations of glassmakers which were presented as having forced Mansell to employ foreign glassmakers, finding few native subjects willing to work his furnaces.²⁴⁰

The statement continued by attacking those London glaziers involved in the petitioning campaign against Mansell, once again publicly acknowledging the divide which had been caused in their own company. Bennett was presented as an engrosser of window glass and accused of enhancing his personal estates to the value of £10,000 through his monopolising activities.²⁴¹ The statement even noted the involvement of the master of the Company John Markes in the campaign. The authors noted that Markes had previously supported Mansell's grant even at a time when 'the rest of the glasyers were of the Contrary opynion.'²⁴² His move to oppose the same was presented as self-interested; he had now lent sums of £50 towards Hay's Scottish glass works.²⁴³ Other glaziers who had signed the petition had only done so as they were indebted to the others or had been manipulated into signing by fear of arrest or 'other p[er]swasions.'²⁴⁴ Finally the document described the merchants, shopkeepers, and bugle makers who had signed the petition as being 'not worth the Carractring', though it did launch a brief attack on one individual named Madam Caesar who they claimed sold counterfeit amber beads in the realm.²⁴⁵

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Kenyon, *Glass Industry*, p. 129.

²⁴⁰ SRO, DD/PH/222/103, fo. 181r.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., fo. 181v.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Mansell camp in this dispute thus launched a powerful counter campaign which included not only petitions but also briefs and character statements. In turn this document became one amongst many circulated amongst MPs as they sought to persuade the Commons of the validity of Mansell's patent. What is notable is that to do so, they focused more on discounting the petition offered against them than in highlighting the benefits of Mansell's monopoly. This was clearly regarded as necessary in the face of a Commons which had proven to be so sympathetic to anti-monopoly complaints. By engaging with the prominent themes of faction and self-interest, these glaziers shaped their presentation of this case to fit the dominant discourse in contemporary political culture.

In response to these allegations, disaffected glassmakers and glaziers presented one additional document to the committee for grievances. This attests to the dialogic element in petitioning disputes heard before parliament; this was not only a feature of anti-monopoly campaigns heard before the Council.²⁴⁶ Surviving in the papers of both Phelips and Alford is a copy of answers of glassmakers to the charge that they had both 'combyned and practised to keepe the mysterie of making of Glasse from the English Natives.'²⁴⁷ This short reply addressed one key issue: the notion of native versus alien employment. The glassmakers stressed that many of them were descendants of English families, including the Strudwicks and Peytoves, who for around two hundred years 'did practice and vse the Art of making of drinking glasses.'²⁴⁸ Continuing on this theme, they also claimed that '18 of the Petitioners were Natives of this kingdome, and instructed by other Natives in like maner.'²⁴⁹ It was simply not true that these artisans had worked to monopolise the industry amongst their own faction. The petitioners also attempted to respond to the myriad accusations made against Bungard. They noted that Bungard's family had, about sixty years prior, re-introduced the art of window glass making into the realm. It was only Mansell's

²⁴⁶ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, p. 286.

²⁴⁷ 'Answer of glassmakers to charges of secrecy and combination', 1621, SRO, DD/PH/222/108, fo. 187r; Harleian 6806, in *CD 1621*, vii, pp. 539-40.

²⁴⁸ SRO, DD/PH/222/108, fo. 187r.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

patent which had stopped these families from practising their art and from teaching others. Their countersuit ended by challenging the suggestion that Mansell had been the first to use coal to fuel furnaces. Instead, the petitioners complained that this fuel had long been used by Bungard, whose nephew had been tricked into spilling the secrets of the trade to the patentees upon 'faire promises.'²⁵⁰ By engaging with the notions of native and alien employment so apparent in the counter-petitioning campaign the glassmakers attempted one last time to present Mansell's monopoly as a source of displacement and loss of labour for a multitude of the realm's lawful subjects.

The petitions presented by these London and Wealden based glaziers and glassmakers influenced proceedings on the floor of the House, ensuring that the glass patent received considerable attention amidst the Commons' investigation of a multitude of grants. Godfrey has argued that the glass monopoly did not trigger the same level of opposition as did other grants, an interpretation which severely underestimates the degree of discontent articulated from across the realm.²⁵¹ Evidence from parliamentary diaries refers to further petitions considered by the grievances committee on Mansell's monopoly. Pym recorded the presentation of 'Divers Complaint[s] against the Patent for Glass.'²⁵² Glaziers in Gloucestershire complained that the price of a case of glass had increased from sixteen to twenty-four shillings whilst glaziers in Lancaster complained that they were 'much oppressed by the excessive Prices of Broad Glasses, by Means of the Patentees.'²⁵³ Glassmakers in Staffordshire lamented that they had been forced to give up their glass houses.²⁵⁴ The diary of the MP Edward Nicholas shows that some of these complaints were presented as written petitions; glaziers in Hertfordshire, Wiltshire, and Southampton petitioned

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 105.

²⁵² *CD 1621*, iv, p. 352.

²⁵³ *Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons in 1620 and 1621* (2 vols; Oxford, 1766), I, pp. 360-1, accessed at *Eighteenth century collections online*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0105064105/ECCO?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=920931af&pg=1>.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 361.

against it.²⁵⁵ Other corporations in London also joined in these investigations. The Apothecaries' Company petitioned to complain that the increase in glass prices was affecting their ability to produce scientific equipment.²⁵⁶ By contrast the Spectaclemakers petitioned in favour of the patent, likely because Mansell's grant meant that more spectacles were made in the realm and fewer were imported.²⁵⁷ Clearly discontent surrounding the glass monopoly spread further than London alone, undermining the London glaziers' argument that only Bungard's faction opposed it.

The strength and scale of this petitioning activity, combined with the vocal elements in the Commons who disliked projectors and monopolists, meant that they proved receptive to these complaints. By 14 May Mansell's patent received further examination in the committee for grievances and certificates on the price of glass were considered from across the realm.²⁵⁸ MPs continued to grapple with the reasons as to why such a detested monopoly had found such ready support in London, again concluding that this must have been because glaziers in London were supplied with better glass than the rest of the country.²⁵⁹ The strong counter-petitioning campaign launched by Mansell's camp was not enough to persuade the House; by 16 May the glass patent was declared as a grievance. Whilst Godfrey has suggested that the anti-prerogative sentiments of Coke were an important factor facilitating this decision, the number of petitions and complaints sent from across the realm, combined with the anti-monopoly sentiments of so many MPs, undoubtedly led to this pronouncement.²⁶⁰

Despite this pronouncement, the realm's glassmakers and glaziers did not achieve any immediate relief. A list of monopolies compiled by Attorney General Sir Robert Heath on 20 May 1621 noted that James had decided to take 'direction himself' on the future of the glass patent.²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ *CD 1621*, iii, p. 196.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 256.

²⁵⁸ *CD 1621*, ii, p. 366. It was here that Coke made his famous utterance that Mansell's glass furnace was but a 'new button to an ould coate', *CD 1621*, v, p. 170.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 367.

²⁶⁰ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 113-14.

²⁶¹ 'List [By Sir Robt. Heath], of seven patents, condemned by the House of Commons', 20 May 1621, TNA, SP 14/121, fo. 108r.

Mansell clearly stood high enough in the King (and Buckingham's) favours for an active effort to be made to ensure he continued to receive the benefits of the patent. By 18 June the Council wrote to custom officials ordering them to ensure that Mansell's patent 'be respected' given his current absence abroad.²⁶² Whilst Elizabeth had been present to fight his cause in parliament, his own personal absence was cited as detrimental to his ability to defend himself. The strength of her organised petitioning campaign was overlooked and underestimated.

Mansell's grant continued to be enforced. By December 1621 the Commons wrote to Lord Treasurer Cranfield calling on him to persuade the King to stay Mansell's grant, the same having been condemned by them as a 'great grievance to the subiect.'²⁶³ In response, Mansell would issue yet another list of defences in favour of his patent by 21 December.²⁶⁴ Here he made direct reference to the support shown to his grant by the Glaziers' Company; the alliance clearly provided him with a basis through which to claim his patent occasioned widespread support in the industry.

However, the petitioning campaign against Mansell had not been in vain. On 14 June 1621 Hay was given permission to export his Scottish glass into England, something glassmakers had been agitating for since at least 1620.²⁶⁵ To compensate him for subsequent losses, Mansell's obligations to pay an annual rent to James were cancelled, creating a striking situation in which a courtier held a powerful monopoly grant in exchange for no rent. By 22 May 1623 Mansell was issued with yet another patent for the making of glass for fifteen years, which also relinquished his obligation to pay previous patentees any compensation.²⁶⁶ The importation of foreign glass was still allowed, a concession which opponents desperately clung to. The wording of the new patent was interesting. It suggested that James had removed Mansell's obligation to pay rents to ensure

²⁶² '[The Council] to the Officers of Customs', 18 June 1621, TNA, SP 14/121, fo. 216r.

²⁶³ 'Request of the House of Commons', 19 Dec. 1621, TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 117r.

²⁶⁴ 'Reasons in defence of the glass patent', 21 Dec. 1621, BL, Add. MS 12,496, fos. 155r-156v; 'Reasons in support of continuation of glass patent', 1621, SRO, DD/PH/222/107, fo. 186.

²⁶⁵ *APC*, 37, pp. 400-1.

²⁶⁶ *APC*, 38, pp. 329-30, 406-7. For text of the patent see Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, pp. 416-23. For disputes this created with past patentees see 'Lady Mary Vere to Sec. Conway on new patent for Mansell', 13 Feb. 1623, TNA, SP 14/138, fos. 50r-51v; *APC*, 38, p. 464.

that he would not be enforced to raise the price of glass, recognising that this had been a source of complaint in the commonwealth. Direct reference was also made to the 'petic[i]ons and certificates' of London's glaziers, glass sellers, and spectacle makers to justify the need for this patent.²⁶⁷ The petitions presented in support of Mansell in 1621 may have failed in their attempts to persuade parliament of the validity of the earlier patent, but they had perhaps more significantly become an integral aspect of the justification of this later one.

The opposition against the glass patent in 1621 was powerful and widespread. Taking advantage of the standing committee for grievances, disaffected glassmakers and glaziers were able to protest Mansell's monopoly to a parliament which proved more than willing to condemn projectors and monopolists as vipers of the commonwealth. Their efforts ensured that the monopoly was an important topic of discussion on the parliamentary agenda. However, the power and influence of Mansell, strengthened by his alliance with members of the Glaziers' Company, meant that the patent was not revoked. Glassmakers would not be perturbed. The summoning of the final parliament of the Jacobean period, and one further important institutional development, would present them with another opportunity to protest this vexatious grant.

The decision to grant Mansell a new patent for glass was, as one might guess, not met with enthusiasm by the realm's glassmakers and disaffected glaziers, who continued to mount a strong campaign of active resistance.²⁶⁸ This included such figures as Bungard and Vinion but also other subjects from across the realm; in February 1623 a woman named Mrs Jane Burton was listed by the Council as erecting an illegal glass works.²⁶⁹ Such was their degree of discontent that Bungard

²⁶⁷ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, pp. 418-9.

²⁶⁸ See *APC*, 38, pp. 8, 17-18, 23, 91, 113, 116, 324, 495; *APC*, 39, pp. 11-12, 34-5, 57-8; 'Petition of Sir Wm. Clavell to the Council', 22 Aug. 1623, TNA, SP 14/151, fo. 41; 'Sir Wm. Beecher to the Council', 24 June 1623, TNA, SP 14/147, fo. 64r.

²⁶⁹ *APC*, 38, p. 423.

and Worrall issued joint petitions to the Council requesting that a patent for glassmaking be issued to themselves in return for annual rents to the Crown.²⁷⁰ So exhausted were the Council with such lamentations that Worrall and another glassmaker named Robert Lambert were prohibited from offering any further petitions concerning glass on pain of imprisonment.²⁷¹ This was remarkably similar to the ban on petitioning issued to members of the Dyers' Company in 1605, reflecting the fact that incessant petitioning activity was a source of concern for the Council.

James's final parliament in February-May 1624 was a disruptive event, witnessing the consideration of the economic depression, the future of England's cloth industry, and extensive discussion of the Spanish Match.²⁷² Discussion of monopolies and the problems posed by corporate governance remained a key priority. Glassmakers once again used the opportunities provided by the standing committee for grievances to present petitions against Mansell's new patent. By 5 March Pym recorded the presentation of a 'petition...against Sir Robert Mansell's patent for the glasshouse.'²⁷³ It is likely that this is the same petition as found in Alford's papers and titled as the 'Humble Petition of Glass makers, Glaziers & Bugle Makers.'²⁷⁴ Alford's copy is brief and contains no details of its subscribers. However, the petition proceeded to offer similar complaints against Mansell as presented in 1621 suggesting the involvement of Bungard and Bennett. Mansell would later identify them as its authors.²⁷⁵ The petitioners thus made direct and specific references to the parliamentary condemnation of Mansell's patent on both the '4 May 1614 and also the 16th day of May 1621', where the patent was 'adjudged to be a Monopolie and generall greivance vnto the Subject.'²⁷⁶ Much like in 1621 an attempt was made to appeal to parliament; in 'contempt' of these decisions Mansell had continued to enforce his patent, seizing glass, restricting imports, and

²⁷⁰ TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 227r; 'Petition of Isaac Bungard to the Council', c. 1621, TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 228r.

²⁷¹ APC, 38, p. 465.

²⁷² See Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*; R. E. Ruigh, *The Parliament of 1624: Politics and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 1971).

²⁷³ '5 Mar. 1624', *PP 1624* (12 July 2021).

²⁷⁴ 'The Humble petition of Glass makers, Glaziers & Bugle makers', 1624, BL, Harleian 6803, fo. 5r.

²⁷⁵ 'Statement in defence of Sir Robt. Mansell's glass patent', Apr. 1624, TNA, SP 14/162, fos. 108-109.

²⁷⁶ BL, Harl. 6803, fo. 5r.

commencing expensive legal suits against his opponents.²⁷⁷ In a particularly emotive appeal the petitioners suggested that this unscrupulous patentee had caused many subjects to 'runne the Country' and others to 'Starve.'²⁷⁸ The petitioners thus called on the Commons to examine Mansell's new patent and to ensure that all contracts between glass workers and Mansell made 'vpon theis Monopolying Patents' be cancelled.²⁷⁹

Disaffected glassmakers had therefore once again turned to manuscript supplications to lament the effects of Mansell's monopoly. However, another important development in petitioning practice changed the nature of this anti-monopoly campaign by 1624: the rise of print. Printed broadside petitions proliferated in parliament in the 1620s.²⁸⁰ London's companies emerged as prominent users of the same to issue their complaints to parliament. As many as 130 broadside petitions from corporations and individuals survive from the 1620s alone, concerning a range of economic issues.²⁸¹ This development impacted the petitioning campaign concerning the glass monopoly from the angle both of the patentees and those who opposed the monopoly. Mansell and disgruntled glassmakers and glaziers used printed breviate to persuade the Commons of the validity of their cause.²⁸²

It was unlikely that the use of print was intended to publicise this case to a wider public audience. Here instead we find an example of what Peacey has described as 'discreet petitioning', as subjects turned to print to allow the easier circulation of their petitions amongst MPs.²⁸³ The documents they produced were not for a commercial market; they contained no marks of stationers and no decorations or imprints.²⁸⁴ Instead print offered a means for glassmakers and

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Kyle, *Theater*, p. 196.

²⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 163-5.

²⁸² Previous historiography has offered a brief analysis of these petitions and their contents, but within broader narratives of the development of the industry. See Hartshorne, *Old English glasses*, pp. 195-200; Godfrey, *English glassmaking*, pp. 122-3.

²⁸³ Peacey, 'Parliament', p. 351; Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, p. 282.

²⁸⁴ Peacey, 'Parliament', p. 351.

glaziers to protest Mansell's patent and publicise their case amongst MPs, finding support for their case in the House. It thus allowed them a means of overcoming the 'politics of intimacy' usually so essential to parliamentary lobbying campaigns.²⁸⁵

Two printed documents survive from this parliament. One dated to 16 April consisted of a list of 'reasons ag[ain]st y^e Patt[ent]. For sol[e] making of glasses' and contained a counter-response to a reply issued by Mansell.²⁸⁶ The second document was a breviat presented to the Commons by Mansell challenging the accusations made against him.²⁸⁷ It is likely that the glassmakers had petitioned against Mansell in manuscript form and that Mansell had defended himself in print. In response, glassmakers and glaziers appear to have escalated their own tactics and followed suit, circulating this printed document which contained a summary of their original petition along with their answer to his response. The dialogic element seen in the campaign of 1621 clearly remained, but this time, print became an important means through which countersuits and responses were presented to MPs.

The glassmakers' printed breviat began with a list of fifteen objections against Mansell's patent. It articulated similar ideas as present in the petition in Alford's papers, albeit in much more detail and with some additions, making it possible that this part of the breviat was intended to reiterate their original manuscript supplication. It was unsigned and the names of supplicants were not included, but once again it is likely that Bungard, Worrall, and Bennett were chief amongst the petitioners. Producing a printed breviat was of course no easy task and required money. Bungard was himself a landlord and Bennett was frequently described as a wealthy glazier. Collectively these subjects likely came together to fund the production of this document, again independently of corporate organisation.

²⁸⁵ Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, p. 296.

²⁸⁶ 'Reasons presented to Parliament against Sir Robt. Mansell's patent', 16 Apr. 1624, TNA, SP 14/162, fos. 110r-111r.

²⁸⁷ TNA, SP 14/162, fos. 108v-109r.

Their list of objections included similar lamentations as made within their previous petitions, lamenting the high price of glasses, the 'writs of searches' used by Mansell, and articulating particularly dramatic assertions that many of their 'children doe begge their bread.'²⁸⁸ Appeals to parliamentary authority were again made by the glassmakers, though here they took their appeals further than only referring to the past condemnation of the glass monopolies. They instead attacked one of the main pretences under which the glass patent had been introduced: wood scarcity. Their seventh demand claimed that 'where inconueniences haue appeared to ensue vnto the Common-wealth, the vsuall redresse hath alwayes been by Act of Parliament.'²⁸⁹ Consequently, bills had been presented in parliament which had attempted to preserve the realm's woodland supplies. The move to use a patent to preserve timber directly undermined parliament's rightful role as the reformer of such abuses. This was without precedents. 'A Patent to restraine men of their lawfull trade because of the consumption of wood', the glassmakers claimed, 'was neuer seen before this Patent graunted.'²⁹⁰ If wood scarcity was the main reason for the passing of Mansell's monopoly, then why had not the realm's iron works 'which are greater consumers of wood then Glass-houses' similarly been suppressed?²⁹¹ The glassmakers therefore continued their appeals to parliamentary authority by suggesting that the whole publicly justified basis of the monopoly was in itself an infringement of the ancient role of parliament to redress abuses in the commonwealth.

The glassmakers proceeded to appeal to issues of law and liberties. In their third demand they complained that 'the restraint of men from their lawfull Trade...is against the Law of the Land.'²⁹² Petitioners here engaged with parliament's concerns with liberties and property rights, though unlike the leather sellers or grocers, they did not cite actual statutes such as Magna Carta. They proceeded to complain that Mansell's new patent had allowed him to monopolise the

²⁸⁸ TNA, SP 14/162, fo. 111r.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

industry for an additional number of years; as such this grant which had 'already eaten out many, will consume all the rest.'²⁹³ The petitioners also used the language of bondage to express concern with the effect of these changes on the future of the industry. They claimed that men were discouraged from entering the glass trade finding that, after having served their apprenticeships, they were 'tyed to more slauery then he was in his Apprentiship.'²⁹⁴ Fathers were thus disinclined to put their sons to this trade.

The petitioners ended their appeal with a final attempt to appeal to the sentiments of the Commons, repeating a tactic used in 1621 as they alluded to the debates concerning free trade. In their final demand the petitioners claimed that

Whereas all the Kingdome are now tyed to one market, and to what price they meane to set, if the Patent were dissolued, and the natiues had free liberty, Glasiers and others trading in Glasse or Glasses, might haue free markets, and haue chosse of Glasse and prices...²⁹⁵

They here lamented the concentration of the trade in London. By invoking notions of 'free markets' and 'free liberty' glassmakers attempted to garner support for their cause amongst a House which had already debated the need for a loosening of trade restrictions, shaping their appeals to match the perceived sentiments of the Commons.

Unsurprisingly, Mansell did not allow his patent to be challenged without a fight. His presence in parliament in 1624 meant he no longer had to rely on the glaziers or Elizabeth to organise a counter-petitioning campaign on his behalf. Instead Mansell produced a printed breuiate consisting of two main sections, titled as 'the state of the Cause touching the glasse businesse' to oppose 'the petition of Isaac Bunger, John Worrall, and others.'²⁹⁶ Whilst Hartshorne has dated this document to November 1624, it must be dated to around March-April given that the glassmakers

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ TNA, SP 14/162, fo. 109r.

responded to it in their breviate of 16 April.²⁹⁷ Its beginning section offered a narrative history of the patent, constructing an image of Mansell as a loyal and unwavering servant of the commonwealth.

This was not the first time Mansell had turned to use print to offer a self-congratulating narrative of his career; in 1602 he had printed a work dedicated to Lord Admiral Howard which celebrated his own brave naval pursuits.²⁹⁸ His breviate of 1624, however, contrasted a celebratory narrative of his commercial career with the actions of Bungard, whose schemes and plots had harmed the glass industry. The petition offered a history of the glass monopolies in James's reign, describing Mansell's efforts to establish glass works at London, the Isle of Purbeck, Milford Haven, and Nottingham, before 'contrary to all mens opinions' he successfully established works at Newcastle.²⁹⁹ The hardships faced by Mansell along the way were described in vivid detail, including his 'expençe of money', difficulties finding clay supplies, and even the campaign of opposition launched against him in 1621 whilst he was 'employed at Sea.'³⁰⁰ Mansell even presented Elizabeth as vexed by this campaign, forced to try and defend his patent despite having no access to his personal papers or knowledge of the same. This of course ran at odds to the active and successful role played by Elizabeth during his absence. Mansell's breviate suggested that, amidst all these troubles and against all odds, the courtier-patentee had perfected the art of glassmaking with coal employing as many as '4000 Natiues in the industry'.³⁰¹ This autobiographical narrative culminated in the presentation of Mansell's new grant of 1623 as a legitimate patent bestowed under royal authority with the advice and consent of the Privy Council.

In contrast Bungard was presented as the antithesis of Mansell: as a disruptive and unscrupulous schemer plotting to destroy a patent which greatly improved the commonwealth. Whilst Mansell had worked to perfect the business, Bungard had proven too lazy to use coal, finding

²⁹⁷ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, p. 196.

²⁹⁸ Clark, *Some Account of Sir Robert Mansel*, p. 6.

²⁹⁹ TNA, SP 14/162, fo. 109r.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, fos. 108v-109r.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, fo. 108v.

the 'difficulties, hazard, and charge too great for him to vndergo.'³⁰² This was contrasted to Mansell's perseverance in the face of numerous disruptions. Bungard was accused of having arrived at Mansell's furnaces with the intent to 'ruine the workes', showing employees 'a bagge of money' to incite them to leave Mansell's employment.³⁰³ Not content with this, he had even worked to 'set on foote' Hay's Scottish patent, colluding with 'Masters of Shipping' to disrupt Mansell's supplies of Scottish coal.³⁰⁴ Mansell even made the rather far-fetched claim that Bungard's 'kinsmen' in Rouen had been responsible for disruptions of his clay supplies from France.³⁰⁵ Ultimately these hidden machinations and schemes were all too apparent in Bungard's and Worrall's move to petition the Council for their own glass patent. This had revealed the true intentions behind their petitioning opposition in this and previous parliaments. Their petitions had been 'of meere malice to ruine Sir Robert Mansell, complayning against him for that which they both endeavored...to haue gayned to themselues.'³⁰⁶ This breviat offers a great example of the use of 'politic reasoning' and language first deployed by Mansell's supporters in 1621, drawing on contemporaries' beliefs that the world was full of secret plots and machinations.³⁰⁷ This breviat thus presented a wider history of the glass patent and opposition to it before proceeding to reveal the true motivations of Bungard and Worrell. Such an explanation fits well with the early modern mentality that multiple events were often connected as part of a larger narrative framework.³⁰⁸ Mansell thus used the increasingly important medium of the printed breviat to present his case amongst MPs, constructing a sophisticated account dominated by such issues as conspiracy and duplicity to challenge the campaign against him.

In their own printed breviat, the glassmakers responded to Mansell's accusations through sixteen points, addressing issues including the price and quality of glass and the extent of native

³⁰² *Ibid.*, fo. 109r.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, fo. 108v.

³⁰⁷ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, pp. 145-6.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-19

employment in the industry. They even engaged with points of law, reminding the Commons in their fourteenth article that the 'Imperiall Law imposeth vpon a Monopolist a confiscation of his goods.'³⁰⁹ True, the common law was less severe, but the petitioners hinted at the need for a similar punishment to be inflicted on Mansell.

The petitioners however spent most of this section of the brief engaging directly with the narrative constructed by Mansell. In their second point, they acknowledged that Bungard and Worrell had offered to pay the King for a patent to make glass. But this was not an attempt to gain for themselves a monopoly. Rather, they presented this as a desperate attempt to 'redeeme their liberty', stressing that they had no desire to restrain any glassmakers from the trade.³¹⁰ They also moved to present Bungard not as a villainous schemer, but as a dedicated and principled opposer of Mansell's grant. To do so, they mirrored the presentation of Mansell as tireless in his attempts to establish his glass works by presenting Bungard as constant in his petitioning efforts against the glass monopolies. Bungard 'hath beene a petitioner against these Patents, as at both the seuerall Parliaments' despite 'a great many of the others being vanished that were formerly petitioners together with him.'³¹¹ His decision to reject Mansell's offers to employ him were presented as resulting from his concern for his fellow glassmaking brethren, prioritised above any personal gains he might have received. His own employment would not be enough to protect his 'kindred & others' who had also been 'trained vp in the trade.'³¹² This was contrasted to the actions of London's glass sellers and glaziers who had supported Mansell's grant, motivated purely by their own personal gain. In their seventh point the glassmakers claimed that

As concerning the Certificates of diuers in and neere London, made for Sir Robert Mansel, it is to be obserued that they are those which recieue a benefit of this Patent, because Glasse being onely to be had in the City of London, they buy it of Sir Robert Mansel, and the Country taketh

³⁰⁹ TNA, SP 14/124, fo. 111r.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

it from them at their own prices, whereby they receive a great benefit, and the Country much prejudice.³¹³

The petitioners here moved to explain the discrepancy between the support Mansell's monopoly found in London and the discontent it provoked in the provinces. They were here hinting at the agreement made between Mansell and some of the city's glaziers, who were able to collude with this courtier to monopolise the sale of the commodity to other artisans and traders. Mansell's attempts to channel trade through his glass works in London were presented as part of a pre-made agreement between courtier and artisan, allegations which were likely true.

Both Mansell and the glassmakers therefore used the medium of the printed brief to articulate their cause to interested MPs, in terms of a conspiracy to corrupt the commonwealth. Both made use of common tropes and language to present rival and conflicting narratives of the glass monopolies, presenting parliament with different 'truth claims' to unravel and examine.³¹⁴ By turning to print, both sides also transformed their campaigns from the use of scribal petitions alone, constructing larger narratives and defences of their causes to be circulated amongst MPs. Gone was the manuscript character statement attacking petitioners, replaced by Mansell's printed brief which similarly drew on the language of politic reasoning, faction, and duplicity to present the patentee as unfairly vexed by the machinations and plots of Bungard.

Despite the best efforts of the glassmakers, Mansell's monopoly escaped the condemnation levied on so many other patents in this session. Mansell's continued influence and power meant that the glass monopoly was specifically excluded from the terms of the Statute of Monopolies. On 7 April Mansell requested that the Commons include a proviso exempting his patent, which 'concerned his whole fortune.'³¹⁵ Despite the glassmakers' attempts to oppose his monopoly, Coke announced to the House on 1 May that Mansell's request had been granted. This had not been for any 'love to the business', but in case their refusal to exempt his grant 'should

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Braddick, 'Mobilisation', p. 255.

³¹⁵ '7 Apr. 1624', *PP 1624* (3 July 2021).

hurt the bill.³¹⁶ Mansell's influence was seen as a likely hinderance to the passage of the bill in the Lords. However, Coke did announce that the proviso would state that the glass patent was not to be renewed following the expiry of Mansell's current patent.³¹⁷

The complex and turbulent tale of the glass patent did not end with the passing of the Statute or with the accession of a new monarch. By 1625 Mansell was forced to petition Charles to request a stay of proceedings against his patent at common law in the face of requests made by Bungard and others for his patent to be reviewed.³¹⁸ By this point Mansell could invoke both parliamentary and royal authority to justify his patent. He reminded Charles that his grant had been specifically exempted from the 'Bill of Monopolies'; to revoke it would be to dishonour not only the King's own father who had granted it, but the parliament which had chosen to protect it.³¹⁹ Despite this line of reasoning, by 1626 disgruntled artisans would turn to parliament once more, issuing further articles against Mansell's patent.³²⁰

By the end of 1634 Mansell was issued with another grant for twenty-one years to make glass using sea coal in return for a rent of £1000 per year; the proviso against the re-grant of his patent had clearly been ignored.³²¹ Once again this was justified on account of not only his 'service' but his previous efforts in 'p[er]fecting the Art and skill of making all sorts of Glasse w[i]th Pitcole or Seacole.'³²² Under Charles the complex ties which had bound Mansell and some members of the Glaziers' Company would break down, highlighting their temporary and unstable nature. The Company moved to request their own charter of incorporation independently of Mansell in May 1637.³²³ By January 1638 the now officially incorporated company issued complaints against the

³¹⁶ '1 May 1624', *PP 1624* (3 July 2021).

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Bottomley, 'Mansell v. Bunger', p. 15; 'Reasons to move His Majesty for stay of further proceedings by course of law', Aug. 1625, TNA, SP 16/521, fo. 207r.

³¹⁹ TNA, SP 16/521, fo. 207r.

³²⁰ Hartshorne, *Old English Glasses*, p. 198.

³²¹ Oxford, Bodl., MS. Bankes 11/2, fos. 125r, 127r.

³²² *Ibid.*, fo. 127r.

³²³ 'Petition of Fraternity of Glaziers of London to the King', 5 May 1637, TNA, SP 16/323, fos. 53v-55r.

quality and price of Mansell's glass, repeating claims they had made as early as 1614.³²⁴ The divisions which had split the Company had been healed; Bungard and Worrall became members of the newly incorporated company. Ultimately, Mansell's lucky streak would continue; his patent would not be cancelled until May 1642.³²⁵ After its cancellation, descendants of medieval glassmaking families would continue practising their trades, including members of the Hensey and Tysack families.³²⁶ In the face of the monopolisation of their industry, these subjects had remained steadfast in their wish to practice this trade. Through petitions shaped by both technological developments and contextual considerations these same subjects had fought to defend their industry throughout James's reign.

The glass patent offers strong evidence of the complex negotiations and alliances surrounding monopolies, whilst providing a well-documented example of the capacity for subjects outside of company organisation to launch collective petitioning campaigns. Glassmakers consistently petitioned against Zouch and Mansell's monopolies to crown, parliament, and council, self-funding and organising their protests independently of the larger Glaziers' Company, though some disaffected members of the company were undoubtedly involved. Their campaign attests to the ability for artisans and merchants to petition outside of the remit of company organisation.

³²⁴'Order of Council upon the complaint of the Company of Glaziers against Sir Robert Mansell', 12 Jan. 1638, TNA, SP 16/378, fos. 163r-164v; 'Petition of many Glaziers to the King', c. 1637-8, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 96; 'Answer of Sir Robert Mansell', c. 1637-8, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 98; 'Exceptions by the Glaziers to Sir Robt. Mansell's allegations', c. 1637-8, TNA, SP 14/113, fo. 99r. Godfrey dates these last three petitions to sometime in 1618 and they are calendared as dating to 1620, yet they contain the same arguments and points summarised in the Council report of January 1638 and make reference to the outbreak of plague, allowing us to date them to this later date, see Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, pp. 88-90

³²⁵ Godfrey, *English Glassmaking*, p. 132.

³²⁶ Ross, 'Glass Industry', p. 42. Ross cites an agreement made in 1703 between glassmakers in Bristol and Stourbridge referencing glass houses run by members of these families.

As a monopoly which received particular attention within parliaments, the glass case demonstrates the importance of the standing committee for grievances and the anti-monopoly concerns of many MPs for facilitating parliamentary petitioning activity. Concerned as so many MPs were with preventing undue extensions of the royal prerogative, the examination and condemnation of monopoly grants was a key feature of proceedings in James's parliaments. Glassmakers, glaziers, and glass workers throughout the realm utilised these opportunities to petition authority. The cumulative impact of these petitions was significant. In July 1621 James issued a proclamation revoking many of the patents condemned in the Commons and referring others to review by the common law.³²⁷ James reminded subjects that he did not wish to be bothered with any 'causelesse clamors', but his openness to the hearing of anti-monopoly petitions was publicly stated through his suggestion that 'both His owne, and the eares of His privie Councell shall be open to the modest and just complaints of His people' concerning any 'Monopolies and other Patents of evill nature.'³²⁸

Petitioning protest was also channelled through a new institution, a Commission for Glass, providing us with important insights into the response of council and crown to the influx of anti-monopoly supplications. To vet and in many ways to off-load the burden of hearing petitions onto loyal councillors, a new Commission was charged with enforcing the terms of Mansell and Hay's patents and with considering any petitions concerning the same. Ultimately it proved to be largely sympathetic to Mansell, yet its creation attests to a new understanding that anti-monopoly petitioning complaints were an unavoidable feature of political life.

This case also serves to highlight the importance of both scribal and print culture in Jacobean parliaments in relation to economic arguments. Millstone has argued that the parliaments of 1621 and 1624 witnessed increases in the quantity of scribal material produced; Phelip's and Alford's papers attest to this trend.³²⁹ The existence of material relating to monopoly

³²⁷ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 511-19.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 519.

³²⁹ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, p. 98.

disputes within both these collections also demonstrates that economic matters, including cases surrounding monopolies, were deemed as important proceedings worthy of collection and documentation. Phelps' papers in particular serve to demonstrate important intersections of interest. As an MP who was concerned with the issues of prerogative and liberties, Phelps' interest in the glass case seems to have been part of his larger concern with the effect of monopolies on the liberties of subjects. As such, Phelps saw in these debates their larger implications, understanding the strong interrelation between these economic and political issues.

The use of printed breviate by Mansell and his opponents in 1624 provides a strong example of 'discreet petitioning' in practice.³³⁰ As parliamentary culture was increasingly influenced by print, petitioners too issued printed articles and statements of their cases, combining these with manuscript supplications to bolster their appeals. Mansell's own attempts to undermine the petitioning opposition of Bungard and Worrall in 1624 also offers a strong example of the existence of 'politic reasoning' within such documents, and within anti-monopoly petitioning campaigns; this was not simply a style of reasoning reserved for pamphlets dealing with political issues or court histories.³³¹ Mansell used his breviate to create a narrative based on deceit and secrecy, escalating the types of attacks which had been made on petitioners in previous cases such as that of starch or leather. The counter-petitioning campaigns of both 1621 and 1624 drew on a rhetoric of faction and conspiracy to bolster their appeals. As they attempted to undermine this narrative, Bungard and other glassmakers also adapted their rhetoric to appeal to notions of parliamentary authority and free trade. Both sides in the dispute thus demonstrate the sophisticated use of contextual discourses within petitioning campaigns, as issues prominent in larger political culture in the 1620s entered economic petitioning disputes.

The narrative of the glass monopolies also serves to highlight the complexities and variety of interests involved in the early modern glass industry, as glass became highly contested in court,

³³⁰ Peacey, 'Parliament', p. 351.

³³¹ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, p. 130.

council, and parliament. The shifting allegiances of the Glaziers' Company offers yet another example of the opportunities for collusion between courtiers and artisans, as well as differences of interest within the Company itself. In turn the case of glass offers us an example of a monopoly which heavily split interests, as each side sought to maintain their own ability to exercise this crucial trade. These alliances and machinations leave their trace in the rich evidence provided by petitioning documents. Whilst the glassmakers may have been unsuccessful in revoking Mansell's patent, their petitioning efforts ensured that the glass monopoly remained an issue on the parliamentary agenda throughout the 1620s. Yet in this larger context of parliamentary concern with monopolies, it was not the only patent to receive examination. It is to a campaign launched against an established company in the realm which concerned the issue of corporate governance more broadly that we will now turn.

Chapter four

'A land so distressed without war': economic crisis, the Commissions for Trade, and anti-monopoly petitioning in late Jacobean England (c. 1622-1624)

As you have heard of great wants among the clothing people crying out of hunger, so will all the landowners, husbandmen, and labourers be distressed, each one in their degree, and beggary and thievery abound... When was it seen a land so distressed without war?¹

In a report dated July 1623 the economic writer Sir Ralph Maddison painted a bleak picture of a realm distressed by economic crisis.² He vividly described the hunger and despair faced by subjects of varying degrees in the context of a 'paralysing' breakdown of the English economy.³ From 1620-1624, a European-wide depression affected English subjects acutely; unemployment abounded, harvests failed, and the realm's chief trade, the clothing industry, seemed at the point of collapse in the eyes of contemporaries. Official anxieties were especially high, as reports of riots, gatherings of large crowds, and thefts of staple commodities in clothing districts reached the Privy Council. In his letter Maddison commented on what he believed were the main reasons for this unrest. In addition to the high prices of corn, Maddison identified the 'want of monies and want of employment and labour for the poor' as a central cause of the depression.⁴ Like many of his contemporaries, Maddison adopted a monetary explanation, identifying the export of coin and issues in the foreign exchange as key causes of the realm's upheavals.⁵ Maddison noted, however, that of all the realm's subjects it was the 'clothing people' who were most affected by current conditions.⁶ Overall, his letter accurately described some of the consequences of this depression,

¹ 'Sir Ralph Maddison on the help of trade', 2 July 1623, *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, p. 26.

² P. Gauci and A. McConnell, 'Maddison, Sir Ralph (1574?-1656)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/17755> (2 Apr. 2021).

³ C. Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763* (London, 1971), p. 74.

⁴ *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, p. 25.

⁵ B. Dietz, 'England's Overseas Trade in the Reign of James I', in A. G. R. Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (London, 1973), pp. 117-19.

⁶ *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, p. 25.

even if he displayed only a limited understanding of its chief causes: currency manipulations, the upheavals caused by the Thirty Years' War, and the troubles facing the cloth industry.⁷

The depression which affected England in the 1620s has been studied extensively by economic historians attempting to establish the root causes, chronology, and consequences of this tumultuous period in the late Jacobean age.⁸ Barry Supple and J. D. Gould have offered the most convincing analyses of the causes of the crisis, identifying the importance of currency manipulations in Germany and Poland for pricing English goods out of German and Baltic markets.⁹ These events had a particularly disastrous effect on England's clothing industry. Undressed and white broadcloths had been England's most important commodity, exported by the powerful and ancient Merchant Adventurers' Company to their mart towns in Germany and the Low Countries. Between 1615-1624 exports declined dramatically. Larger structural changes and a growing demand for new, lighter types of cloth known as the New Draperies contributed to the decline in exports of traditional white, undressed broadcloths.¹⁰ This was worsened by Dutch competition in cloth making.¹¹ The industry had also faced an earlier blow in 1615, though one which was delivered by a source much closer to home. In this year, James's attention was captured by a revenue-raising project proposed by the courtier Sir William Cockayne to replace the export of white and undressed broadcloths with the more profitable dyed and dressed equivalents. Persuaded by these schemes, James decided to take a 'gigantic gamble' on England's chief exported commodity, incorporating a

⁷ For the causes of this depression, see Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, chs. 3-4; A. Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade: the Commercial Policy of England in its Main Aspects, 1603-1625* (Copenhagen and London, 1927), ch. 6; R. W. K. Hinton, *The Eastland Trade and the Common Weal in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1959), ch. 2; J. D. Gould, 'The Trade Depression of the Early 1620's', *Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1954), pp. 81-90; C. P. Kindleberger, 'The Economic Crisis of 1619 to 1623', *Journal of Economic History*, 51:1 (Mar., 1991), pp. 149-75.

⁸ Ibid. See also Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, i, ch. 9; Lipson, *Economic History*, iii, pp. 305-11, 381-3; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, ch. 1.

⁹ Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, chs. 3-4; Gould, 'Trade Depression', pp. 88-90.

¹⁰ Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship*, pp. 76-8; D. C. Coleman, 'An Innovation and Its Diffusion: the "New Draperies"', *Economic History Review*, 22:3 (Dec., 1969), pp. 417-29; Dietz, 'England's Overseas Trade', p. 106.

¹¹ Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, pp. 81-8; J. K. Fedorowicz, *England's Baltic Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century: A Study in Anglo-Polish Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 159; Hinton, *The Eastland Trade*, ch. 2.

new company of King's Merchant Adventurers headed by Cockayne himself, and revoking the ancient Adventurers' Company.¹² Yet the new Company failed in its promises to establish England's dyeing and dressing trade, sending shockwaves through the clothing industry as exports continued to decline, unemployment rose, and a persistent threat of riots hung over the heads of the Privy Council. Whilst Astrid Friis previously viewed the project as the chief cause of the economic depression, it is now understood to have been only an important contributing factor for the realm's troubles.¹³

Whilst the causes and chronology of this economic crisis have been extensively analysed, its broader effects on the realm's subjects have often been limited to statements noting the widespread unemployment it triggered.¹⁴ Scholars have focused extensively on how the crisis was perceived by leading economic thinkers of the day, and the rise of new economic theories articulated in the works of figures including Thomas Mun, Edward Misselden, and Gerard de Malynes.¹⁵ New ideas began to enter into economic discourse including the concept of improvement, the balance of trade, and the benefits occasioned by private enterprise.¹⁶ Scholarship has been dominated by a heavy focus on these concepts or on the printed pamphlets

¹² Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, p. 34; Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, chs. 4-5; J. D. Benson, *Changes and Expansion in the English Cloth Trade in the Seventeenth Century: Alderman Cockayne's Project* (New York and Ontario, 2002), chs. 3-5; T. Leng, *Fellowship and Freedom: The Merchant Adventurers and the Restructuring of English Commerce, 1582-1700* (Oxford, 2020), ch. 6; C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700. Volume II: Industry, Trade and Government* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1984), pp. 119-21; G. D. Ramsay, 'Clothworkers, Merchant Adventurers and Richard Hakluyt', *English Historical Review*, 92:364 (July, 1977), pp. 504-21.

¹³ Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, pp. 384-5; Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, p. 168; Leng, *Fellowship*, p. 21; J. P. Cooper, 'Economic Regulation and the Cloth Industry in Seventeenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20 (Dec., 1970), p. 77.

¹⁴ Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, pp. 53-8; Lipson, *Economic History*, pp. 305-8; Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, pp. 166-9.

¹⁵ J. D. Gould, 'The Trade Crisis of the Early 1620's and English Economic Thought', *Journal of Economic History*, 15:2 (1955), pp. 121-33; Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship*, pp. 57-62; Appleby, *Economic Thought*, ch. 2; Magnusson, *Mercantilism*, ch. 3. Different interpretations for the causes of this new body of economic thought have been put forward. Both Slack and Supple have argued that crisis triggered this new thought, see Slack, 'Political Economy', pp. 55-72; Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, ch. 3; Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, ch. 10. By contrast, Erikson links the growth of new economic discourse to debates and controversies surrounding corporatism, see Erikson, *Trade and Nation*, chs. 2-3.

¹⁶ Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, ch. 3.

produced by economic thinkers to the neglect of surviving manuscript source materials.¹⁷ A central feature of the crisis has hitherto been neglected: the writing and sending of supplications by subjects attempting to negotiate and navigate this changing economic landscape. George Ramsay has offered perhaps the most extensive analysis of petitioning in the crisis, examining supplications sent from clothiers in Wiltshire to the Council and Quarter Sessions to highlight the extent of unrest caused by problems in the industry.¹⁸ Yet the crisis triggered petitioning activity from areas beyond Wiltshire alone; between 1622-1624 petitioning emerged as the key means through which many subjects responded to the depression engulfing the realm.

As it attempted to establish the root causes and potential remedies to the crisis, authorities established two important bodies which were to emerge as important points of contact for petitioning activity: the temporary and permanent Commissions for Trade. Firstly, in April the Council established a temporary Commission for Trade, consisting of twelve members charged with the task of considering the causes of, and proposing remedies to, the problems affecting the clothing industry. By September 1622 this was replaced by a permanent standing Commission for Trade intended to continue this vital work. The appointment of these commissions has been no secret in scholarship; their presence has been noted within larger works charting the chronology of the crisis, and scholars have focused especially on a report compiled by the temporary commissioners by June 1622.¹⁹ Scholars have however tended to focus on the presence of figures including Mun and Misselden as commissioners, highlighting the importance of this space for the

¹⁷ For calls to consider manuscript sources, see C. Tazzara, 'Managing Free Trade in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Information, and the Free Port of Livorno', *Journal of Modern History*, 86:3 (Sept., 2014), p. 527; C. Suprinyak, 'Dreams of Order and Freedom: Debating Trade Management in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 40:3 (Sept., 2018), p. 406.

¹⁸ G. D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2nd edn (London, 1965), ch. 5.

¹⁹ Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, pp. 416-27; Benson, *Changes and Expansion*, pp. 85-6; Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, pp. 66-71; Hinton, *Eastland Trade*, pp. 26-31; C. M. Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of Trade and Plantations, 1622-1675* (Baltimore, 1908), p. 12; H. Llewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade* (London and New York, 1928), pp. 3-5; Cooper, 'Economic Regulation', pp. 78-80; Lipson, *Economic History*, pp. 307-10; H. Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries: from the Earliest Time up to the Industrial Revolution*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1966), pp. 189-94.

development of their economic doctrines.²⁰ At times, the wider significance of these bodies has been openly dismissed; Paul Kopperman described the permanent Commission as 'inactive.'²¹ Heretofore, only Paul Slack has offered a consideration of the wider political impact of these commissions. Slack argues for the importance of these bodies for encouraging public debate on economic issues, signalling an acceptance by authority that the Crown alone could not be the sole determinant of the realm's economic policy.²² His analysis stresses the need for these economic bodies to be evaluated according to their political impacts. Despite these calls, a key feature of these commissions has still been overlooked, namely, their hearing and receiving of anti-monopoly petitioning complaints. As the Crown actively sought the opinion of merchants and clothiers on the depression, subjects used the opportunities this presented to petition new bodies of authority. In the context of crisis, their supplications went beyond articulating simple lamentations on their poverty or distress. Instead, these subjects articulated anti-monopoly sentiments as they attacked one of the most powerful incorporated bodies of the Jacobean age: the Merchant Adventurers' Company.

The following chapter will offer an analysis of anti-monopoly petitioning activity channelled via the temporary and permanent Commissions for Trade. Whilst previous chapters have focused on opposition directed to individual monopoly grants and new companies, the following will consider attacks made against the Adventurers' Company, whilst arguing for the important role of petitions and the Commissions for Trade in the eventual reduction of their powers. Both Thomas Leng and Robert Ashton have noted the decline in the Adventurers' monopoly by 1624, attributing this to parliamentary attacks and the increasingly fractious relationship between the Crown and

²⁰ Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship*, pp. 58-60; C. Suprinyak, 'Trade, Money, and the Grievances of the Commonwealth: Economic Debates in England During the Commercial Crisis of the Early 1620's', *History of Economic Ideas*, 24:1 (2016), pp. 27-55; Magnusson, *Mercantilism*, pp. 64-71.

²¹ P. E. Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath 1575-1649: Window on an Age* (London, 1989), p. 113.

²² Slack, 'Political Economy', pp. 62-5.

company.²³ Ashton has argued that the Crown turned away from their long-standing alliance with the Adventurers, giving in to parliamentary pressure to allow a reduction of their privileges.²⁴ Whilst Robert Brenner has argued against notions that companies and the Crown had fallen out of alliance by 1624, he too acknowledges the effect of parliamentary attacks against the Adventurers in 1624, attacks he argues were possible due to a larger alliance of interests between Buckingham, Prince Charles, and MPs.²⁵ The following chapter will argue for the need to place petitions and the actions of the Commission for Trade at the centre of this narrative.

More broadly, this chapter aims to offer a re-assessment of the interrelation between politics and economics in the late Jacobean age. Perhaps the most detailed consideration of the politics of the period has been conducted by Cogswell, whose work on the ‘blessed revolution’ demonstrated the clear interaction between foreign policy, national identity, and popular opinion in the early 1620s.²⁶ Lake and Pincus have similarly argued for the importance of the 1620s as one of their seminal epochs for the development of the public sphere: religious and political concerns facilitated the growth of political discussion in the realm.²⁷ This chapter will argue that economic issues were equally important, both in the wider politics of the state and to the realm’s non-elite subjects. Political and economic issues were inseparable at this time: concerns with corporate governance, monopoly, and depression dominated the time and attention of statesmen within parliament and Privy Council. In turn, these issues politicised subjects, who drew on such concerns as they engaged with these Commissions. Petitions as manuscript sources will be shown to provide a vital insight into this entanglement between politics and economics, demonstrating the use of prevalent discourses in the economic sphere by subjects intent on furthering their own interests.

²³ T. Leng, *Fellowship*, pp. 223-7; Ashton, *City and the Court*, pp. 108-14. Some accounts of the Company have even failed to take notice of the importance of this period, see R. Robert, *Chartered Companies and their Role in the Development of Overseas Trade* (London, 1969), ch. 2.

²⁴ Ashton, *City and the Court*, p. 109.

²⁵ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 211-13.

²⁶ Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, ch. 8.

²⁷ Lake and Pincus, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, p. 279.

After beginning with a description of the various interested bodies in England's clothing industry, the second section of this chapter will focus on the growth of anti-Adventurer petitioning directed to the Council in the spring of 1622. This section will proceed to discuss the appointment of the temporary Commission for Trade and four petitions sent to this body, from two groups of clothiers and two important London companies, the Staplers and the Drapers. This will demonstrate not only the continued articulation of anti-Adventurer sentiments, but also the ways corporations used the opportunities presented by this Commission to further their own agendas. The third section of the chapter will proceed to consider the consequences of these complaints, including the appointment of the permanent Commission for Trade by September. It will conclude by showing not only the centrality of this space as a new point of contact for economic petitioning activity, but also argue for the importance of this body for helping to reduce the monopoly powers of one of the most powerful corporations of the Jacobean age.

The cloth trade consisted of various distinct interest groups. From the fourteenth century, England's overseas trade was dominated by two important regulated companies, the Staplers and the Merchant Adventurers. Wool was one of England's most important exported commodities, and the Staplers dominated the export of wools, hides, and tin to the realm's staple port at Calais.²⁸ The Staplers faced a decline in their fortunes as a new product, cloth, came to rise in prominence, replacing the previous dominance of the wool-export trade.²⁹ Whilst an annual average of 30,000 sacks of wool and 5,000 cloths were exported from the realm in the early fourteenth century, this

²⁸ R. H. Tawney (ed.), *Studies in Economic History: The collected papers of George Unwin* (London, 1927), pp. 137-45; G. F. Ward, 'The Early History of the Merchants Staplers', *English Historical Review*, 33:131 (July, 1918), pp. 297-319.

²⁹ Ward, 'Merchants Staplers' p. 298; P. J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1962), p. 185; E. E. Rich, *The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple* (Cambridge, 1937), ch. 2; G. D. Ramsay, *The Merchants of the Staple and the Downfall of the English Wool Export Traffic* (Firenze, 1974).

changed to 4,000 sacks of wool and over 100,000 cloths by the mid-sixteenth century.³⁰ The Staplers were thus eclipsed in importance by the Adventurers, who specialised chiefly in the export of undressed and white cloths to their mart towns in Germany and the Low Countries.³¹

The Adventurers had a close relationship to the Crown which only continued to grow in the sixteenth century. In turn, their monopoly control of the realm's burgeoning cloth export trade expanded; by 1606 they controlled three-quarters of London's total cloth exports.³² The Staplers were far from happy with this reversal in their fortunes, frequently attempting to challenge the Adventurers' monopoly by claiming for themselves the right to transport cloth as a 'staple' commodity. Star Chamber cases and disputes before the Council saw both companies repeatedly fight on this point.³³ A commission of 1581 ultimately found in favour of the Adventurers, depriving the Staplers of the right to export cloth unless they entered bonds to recompense the Adventurers for any injuries this caused them.³⁴ In the face of such troubles, many Staplers turned their attentions to the domestic wool trade, acting as unpopular middlemen as they purchased wool from producers and supplied it to clothiers.³⁵ By James's reign, the Adventurers remained the dominant merchants in the cloth trade, exporting broadcloths to Middleburg in the United Provinces and to Stade in Northern Germany. Whilst the Company was largely dominated by Londoners, it also had branches in outports and provincial cities including Newcastle, York, and Bristol. Its internal relations were not always smooth sailing; frequent attacks were levelled against

³⁰ Rich, *Ordinance Book*, p. 13.

³¹ See E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Merchant Adventurers' Organisation in London as shown in their own Mediaeval Records', *Economic History Review*, 4:2 (1933), pp. 147-76; A. F. Sutton, 'The Merchant Adventurers of England: their Origins and the Mercers' Company of London', *Historical Research*, 75:187 (Feb., 2002), pp. 25-46; Leng, *Fellowship*.

³² Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, p. 24.

³³ D. R. Bisson, *The Merchant Adventurers of England: The Company and the Crown, 1474-1564* (London and Toronto, 1993), pp. 7-11.

³⁴ The Staplers would continue to fight this. See 'Petition of the Merchants of the Staple to the Council', June 1583, TNA, SP 12/161, fo. 65r; 'Petition of the Merchant Adventurers to the Council', June 1583, TNA, SP 12/161, fo. 63; 'Petition of the Merchants of the Staple to the Council', June 1583, TNA, SP 12/161, fo. 64.

³⁵ Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, pp. 156-64.

the Company by its outport members, lamenting the domination of Londoners in the Company's ranks.³⁶

Another corporation, the Eastland Company, were also important exporters of dyed and dressed cloths to the Baltic. Chartered in 1579, they specialised in the export of these cloths to such areas as Danzig and Elbing, frequently making their returns in cheap Baltic corn.³⁷ By the early seventeenth century, the Eastland Company would face increased pressures in the face of Dutch competition, who frequently dressed and dyed England's cloth and supplied the same to Baltic markets.³⁸ Problems in their trade were likely to have significant effects in Suffolk especially, the Company being the main exporters of the county's dyed and dressed cloths.³⁹

It was not only overseas traders who had a viable interest in the clothing industry; corporations of domestic traders were also prominent. These included the London Clothworkers', Drapers', and Dyers' Companies. The Clothworkers' Company were responsible for the finishing of cloth. The export of undressed and unfinished cloth by the Adventurers was a constant source of vexation for this company. They believed that the establishment of a finishing and dyeing industry in England would help provide employment for numerous subjects, actively lobbying and petitioning for more cloths to be finished in the realm.⁴⁰ The Dyers' Company specialised in the regulation of London's dyeing trade. It was artisan members of the Clothworkers' Company, along with some members of the Dyers, who petitioned the Council in favour of Cockayne's project as early as 1613.⁴¹

³⁶ W. E. Lingelbach, 'The Internal Organisation of the Merchant Adventurers of England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 16 (1902), pp. 60-5; Bisson, *Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 13-20.

³⁷ Hinton, *Eastland Trade*, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ G. D. Ramsay, 'Industrial Discontent in Early Elizabethan London: Clothworkers and Merchant Adventurers in Conflict', *London Journal*, 1:2 (1975), pp. 227-39; Ramsay, 'Clothworkers, Merchant Adventurers and Richard Hakluyt', pp. 504-21; G. Unwin, *Industrial Organisation*, pp. 122-5; Leng, *Fellowship*, pp. 184-6; 'Petition of the poor of the Company of Clothworkers to Salisbury', 3 Apr. 1606, TNA, SP 14/120, fos. 24r- 27r.

⁴¹ CL, CL/B/1/4, fos. 114v, 119v, 121v, 139r, 155v-157r; 'Order in Council on a petition referred to them by the King', 1613, TNA, SP 14/72, fo. 146.

By contrast, the Drapers' Company were a less active group politically, concerned chiefly with the selling of cloth via retail and wholesale. The Company received a new charter in 1607 and, by James's reign, contained many members who practiced a variety of trades.⁴² They had traditionally held the right to conduct searches of the quality of cloths at Blackwell Hall and in fairs throughout the city and were particularly concerned with ensuring that cloth adhered to statutory regulations.⁴³ The renewal of their charter in 1607 had seen their rights to search the houses and shops of cloth sellers and to inspect the quality of their goods confirmed.⁴⁴ However the Drapers appear to have been rather inactive in exercising this regulation, and no longer searched cloths at Blackwell Hall or appointed a keeper for the same.⁴⁵

A final group of subjects instrumental to England's clothing industry were the clothiers, spinners, weavers, carders, fullers, and domestic workers based throughout the realm. Clothiers purchased wool from producers and supplied this to local spinners, weavers, and carders to work, before taking their finished cloths to Blackwell Hall in London to be sold to merchants.⁴⁶ Clothiers were therefore responsible for the employment of numerous subjects; times of depression saw the Council call on them to continue employing subjects. During such times, clothiers blamed merchants for the glut of cloths lying unsold on their hands or in the crowded space of Blackwell Hall, turning to petitions to lament their distress to the Council and the Crown.⁴⁷ Clothiers had been quite an active political group and were more than capable of organising as a lobby when required. They had also long been a source of anxiety to authority; the large numbers of subjects involved in

⁴² A. H. Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London* (5 vols, Oxford, 1915), iii, p. 97; T. Girtin, *The Triple Crowns: A Narrative History of the Drapers' Company, 1364-1964* (London, 1964), p. 214.

⁴³ Johnson, *Drapers of London*, iii, p. 90.

⁴⁴ Girtin, *Triple Crowns*, p. 201.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *Drapers of London*, iii, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, pp. 21-3; R. Hentschell, *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England: Textual Constructions of a National Identity* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 4. For the role of smaller scale clothiers in Yorkshire, see Heaton, *Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, chs. 3-5. For the cloth trade in Wales which was dominated by the Shrewsbury Drapers, see T. C. Mendenhall, *The Shrewsbury Drapers and the Welsh Wool Trade in the XVI and XVII Centuries* (Oxford, 1953).

⁴⁷ See D. Rollison, 'Discourse and Class Struggle: The Politics of Industry in Early Modern England', *Social History*, 26:2 (May, 2001), p. 181.

the cloth industry had led to a perception that they could rise in large-scale, even national, riots or rebellions when aggrieved.⁴⁸

It is important to establish that the attacks the Adventurers were to face in 1622 were not without precedents. The monopoly powers of the Company had been threatened in 1587 as Lord Burghley temporarily ordered the export of cloth to be made free in a desperate attempt to revive the struggling trade.⁴⁹ The government's concern with maintaining order led them to establish an experiment in free trade, giving in to pressures applied by clothiers and wool-growers.⁵⁰ The Adventurers had also faced strong criticisms in previous parliaments; in 1604 they were attacked in the Commons and forced to defend themselves against the 'odious name of monopolist' levelled against them.⁵¹ The Adventurers were targeted as they were seen as a particularly monopolistic body abusing their privileges to pursue the private benefits of their members at the expense of the public good. They were described as the 'springs from which all other Monopolish Trades have proceeded and drawn their form.'⁵²

The Cockayne Project posed a more serious threat to the Adventurers, leading to the revocation of their charter in 1615. Following their restoration in August 1617, the Company came back stronger than ever, with increased powers bestowed on them by the Crown as James attempted to reverse the effects of this failed scheme.⁵³ For example, they were given further powers to act against all interlopers in their trade, sole authority to export New Draperies, and also introduced a new imposition on cloth designed to cover the costs they had paid to secure their re-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 188.

⁴⁹ 'Lord Burghley to Lord Chancellor Hatton', 12 May 1587, TNA, SP 12/201, fos. 24r-27v; 'Proposals for the improvement of the cloth trade and for amending the charter of the Adventurers', 8 May 1587, TNA, SP 12/201, fo. 9. See J. D. Gould, 'The Crisis in the Export Trade, 1586-1587', *English Historical Review*, 71:270 (Apr., 1956), pp. 212-22.

⁵⁰ Gould, 'Crisis', p. 221.

⁵¹ See Leng, *Fellowship*, ch. 5 for argument that these debates were facilitated by the internal weakening of the Company after the Imperial Mandate controversy. For the bill and reasons for and against it, see BL, Lans. MS 487, fos. 146v-148v, 149r-161v, 162r-165r, 179r-182r.

⁵² 'Reasons for free trade', 1604, BL, Lans. MS 487, fo. 166v.

⁵³ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 371-3.

incorporation.⁵⁴ With the calling of parliament in 1621, the Adventurers once again found themselves a source of concerted opposition as part of the Commons' attack on monopolies.⁵⁵ However the intervention of James prevented the Company's ordinances and records being consulted by the House.⁵⁶ Parliamentary pressure did lead to some reduction in the Adventurers' powers; in the summer of 1621 it was agreed that the outports were to be given liberty to export New Draperies to the Adventurers' mart towns.⁵⁷ Besides this concession, the Company managed to remain relatively unscathed. By the parliament of 1624 their luck would change.

The restoration of the Adventurers' Company in 1617 was not enough to halt the spiralling of economic depression in the realm. Reports and petitions of distress in counties such as Gloucestershire and Wiltshire vexed the Council.⁵⁸ Between 1618-1622 the total volume of cloth exports from London declined by as much as a quarter.⁵⁹ The resulting disruptions were such that the age-old antagonism between the Clothworkers' Company and the Adventurers soon reared its head. On 29 March 1617 Secretary Winwood wrote to Sir Thomas Lake of rumours he had heard touching a 'pestilient practice' planned by the Clothworkers and Dyers against the newly restored Adventurers and the prominent members Lionel Cranfield and William Towerson.⁶⁰ The information he had received 'speaks noe mylder language then the cutting of all their throates.'⁶¹

⁵⁴ Leng, *Fellowship*, pp. 221-2.

⁵⁵ See C. Suprinyak, 'Interpreting a Crisis: Trade and Money Debates in England during the Parliament of 1621', *História econômica & história de empresas*, 17:1 (2014), pp. 85-113 for economic debates in this parliament.

⁵⁶ Ashton, *City and Court*, p. 107.

⁵⁷ Leng, *Fellowship*, p. 226.

⁵⁸ APC, 33, pp. 457-8; 'Council to the Justices of Peace, co. Gloucester', 2 Aug. 1616, TNA, SP 14/88, fos. 71r-v; 'Petition of Toby Chapman and Wm. Warner for clothiers in Gloucestershire', Aug. 1616, TNA, SP 14/88, fo. 70r; APC, 35, pp. 2-4, 7-10, 21-22.

⁵⁹ Clay, *Economic Expansion*, ii, p. 121.

⁶⁰ 'Winwood to Lake', 29 Mar. 1617, TNA, SP 14/90, fo. 252v.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Here we are provided with a fascinating insight into the sentiments and grumbling of subordinate subjects in the 'hidden transcript'.⁶²

Whilst such a bloody course of action did not materialise, members of both these companies and clothiers from across the realm turned to petitioning to express their concerns. In March 1617 the Clothworkers' and Dyers' Companies sent a joint petition to the Council complaining of the 'miserable ensuing Calamities' and 'yminent penury' they were forced to face as the Adventurers failed to employ them in cloth-finishing.⁶³ They used the language of poverty as they claimed to consist of as many as 1400 families, whose want of labour and bread threatened 'thousands of poore soules in and about the citty of London.'⁶⁴ Petitions from clothiers in Southampton, Winchester, and Somerset articulated similar complaints in 1618 lamenting the glut of cloths remaining on their hands, the Adventurers' failure to export Somerset 'blues' (a type of dressed cloth), and expressing concern with the high amounts of wool exported from the realm.⁶⁵

In May 1620 a large collective petition was also sent to the Council from 'the miserable poor Weavers of Bromham Chippenham [and] Calne.'⁶⁶ This petition is significant; it contains a total of twenty-seven signatures, including nineteen marks made by illiterate subjects who joined this collective endeavour. The neat secretary script of its text suggests it was likely drawn up by a scribe, and the bringing together of weavers from across towns illustrates the capacity for humble subjects to join to petition independently of such forms of organisation as those provided by company leadership. Whilst precise evidence for its construction is sadly lacking, it is possible that subjects made use of such spaces as markets, taverns, or even the church to prepare their supplication. The

⁶² Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, ch. 1.

⁶³ 'Petition of the handicraft cloth-workers and dyers in and about London to the King', Mar. 1617, TNA, SP 14/90, fo. 254r.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 'Petition of the Clothworkers of Southampton and Winchester to the Council', July 1618, TNA, SP 14/98, fo. 93r; 'Justices of Peace of Somersetshire to the Council', 2 June 1618, TNA, SP 14/97, fos. 294r-v.

⁶⁶ 'Justices of Peace of Wiltshire to the Council', 11 May 1620, TNA, SP 14/115, fo. 28r; 'Weavers of Bromham, Chippenham, Calne and other places in Wiltshire, to the Council', May 1620, TNA, SP 14/115, fos. 86r-87r. This petition has been described by Ramsay as 'tremulous' and 'lurid' but received no further analysis, see Ramsay, *Wiltshire Woollen Industry*, pp. 76-7.

weavers articulated concerns with the distress felt in the cloth trade and the effects this had on their livelihoods. They did not attack the Adventurers. In fact, they were keen to stress that ‘what the cause of this alteration shold bee, wee know not, but the efecte, of the cawse, whatsoever it is, we feele and find to our woe & greife.’⁶⁷ The weavers instead stressed their own ‘extremity, need, & misery.’⁶⁸ They also included an implicit reference to the dangers of the many-headed monster. Whilst they were careful to stress that they were dutiful subjects and aware that ‘to starve is woefull, to steale vngodly, and to beg vnlawfull’, they also warned the Council that to ‘endure our pr[e]sent estate any while [longer] is almost imposible.’⁶⁹ Yet the petitioners were careful to present themselves as having followed acceptable mechanisms for the articulation of their distress, at least thus far. They had first approached their JPs at the Quarter Sessions. Their move to petition the Council was a last resort as they were still ‘compelled to sitt still for lack of worke, w[i]th hungry meales & weeping eyes.’⁷⁰

The strength of their appeal was such that the Council referred the supplication to eight privy councillors, before calling on the Adventurers to purchase cloths lying unsold at Blackwell Hall.⁷¹ The petition was no doubt sophisticated, yet the contents of its complaints were similar to those received by the Council from 1615 onwards. At this point, they contained little anti-Adventurer sentiments beyond expressing concerns with the glut of cloths at Blackwell Hall as they looked to the Council to order these merchants to purchase their products.

As the depression worsened, the Council took active measures to prevent the outbreak of disorder. On 9 February 1622, councillors wrote to JPs in ten clothing counties addressing the ‘great distresse’ felt by spinners, weavers, and fullers.⁷² Fear that the ‘Clamors’ of these subjects would

⁶⁷ TNA, SP 14/115, fo. 86r.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *APC*, 37, pp. 200-1, 205-6. The Adventurers even suggested that they were facing problems exporting cloth as they could not import looking glasses, a clear reference to the restrictions imposed by Mansell’s patent.

⁷² ‘The Council to the Justices of Peaces of cos. Wilts, Gloucester, Somerset...’, 9 Feb. 1622, TNA, SP 14/127, fo. 109r.

'disturb the quiet of Government of those p[ar]tes' led the Council to call on JPs to instruct clothiers in their counties not to dismiss their workers.⁷³ JPs were eager to respond to these instructions, especially as rumours of groups of grumbling cloth workers present in various counties had been sparking alarm.⁷⁴ Many went further than cautioning clothiers, but took the opportunity to gather their opinions on the perceived causes of the decay of trade. In response, JPs received petitions and reports from clothiers which they forwarded to the Council. This was a remarkable example of local authorities taking the initiative actively to solicit public opinion as a useful tool to help guide the Council in its response to this crisis.

The petitions and reports received on this issue witnessed a remarkable change in tone and content from the complaints sent to the Council thus far. Instead of offering lamentations on their own poverty, subjects began to articulate more concerted attacks on the Adventurers' Company, including criticisms of its organisation and monopolistic practices. On 6 March Justices in Oxford wrote to the Council to inform them that they had called before them clothiers in their county. In response, six clothiers had delivered 'in wryting certen reasons vnder their hands' for the depression in the realm.⁷⁵ Whilst not self-styled as a petition, this document clearly blurred the lines between report and supplication. It included a list of reasons 'why we cannot keepe o[u]r poore people in worke as formerly we have donne.'⁷⁶ Yet it also articulated clear grievances and humble language before ending with a request to the JPs it addressed. The clothiers identified numerous factors causing the decay of trade, including the illegal exportation of wool which was seen as facilitating the production of cloth abroad. The clothiers also attacked the 'greate imposit[i]on w[hi]ch is layd vppon o[u]r Clothe bothe heere in Englande & lykewise beyonde the Seas', a clear reference to the numerous duties levied on cloth, one of which was the new imposition introduced by the Adventurers.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 'Locke to Carleton', 16 Feb. 1622, TNA, SP 14/127, fos. 141r-142v.

⁷⁵ 'Justices of Oxfordshire to the Council', 6 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 25r.

⁷⁶ 'Statement by clothiers in Oxfordshire', 6 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 66r.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Their criticism of the Company became more targeted as they expressed their concern with the limited nature of the organisation itself. They claimed that

wheras formerly ther[e] was a greate Company of worthy Merchants of greate worthe that did Trade in Clothe, yt is now come to a small Company, & for the most p[ar]te younge men, w[hi]ch we suppose are not able to Carry the Trade.⁷⁸

The clothiers were articulating their discontent with the monopolistic control of the trade by an ever-decreasing number of merchants. They identified this as a key reason for their inability to sell their cloths; fewer merchants meant fewer buyers. They therefore complained that, whereas previously they were able to 'sell of o[u]r Clothe for money in the deadeest tymes', they were now facing a situation in which 'many haue stode w[i]th Clothe from Markett to Markett & cannott sell in any sorte.'⁷⁹ The clothiers ended their supplication with a request, calling for a standard rate for the price of cloths to be levied throughout the realm and requesting that all wool be weighed before being purchased by wool dealers and sold to clothiers. They therefore presented their JPs with clear requests within a petitionary report which saw them articulate their opinions as to the causes of the crisis, rather than merely lament their own hardships.

This interesting, albeit slight, criticism of the Adventurers' Company received fuller expression in another report delivered to the Council on 23 March, this time from Justices in Suffolk.⁸⁰ The JPs also acknowledged their receiving of the Council's letter, which had caused them to call the clothiers of their county before them to investigate their opinions on the decay of trade. As in Oxfordshire, clothiers responded to calls to deliver reports, yet it is here unclear whether they did so verbally or via writing. The JPs reported that clothiers had informed them of various reasons for trade decay, including a summary of these in their letter.⁸¹ The clothiers identified causes which were the same as those articulated in the Oxfordshire report, including the export of wool overseas

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ 'Justices of Suffolk to the Council', 23 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fos. 90r-91r.

⁸¹ Ibid.

and the new imposition on cloth. Yet they also included a more specific attack on the issue of corporate governance in the clothing trade, complaining that

the Merchants being Incorporated and settled into companies, doe by Constitutions amonge them selves so crosse the aunciente & accustomed course of their trade, concerning the free selling & buying of their Cloth limitinge it to certaine times, persons & nombers & at what prices the members of their companies shall buye & sell againe aswell here as beyond the Seas.⁸²

They thus claimed that company regulation was 'one chiefe cause' of the decay of their trade.⁸³

The clothiers attacked aspects of the Adventurers' government including the stint (limits on how much cloth each Adventurer could export based on their seniority) and the set departure times of company ships at certain times of the year.⁸⁴ The implication was clear; cloth would sell in higher numbers if the trade was not monopolised by a limited corporation of merchants.

The articulation of anti-Adventurer sentiments can also be seen in a petition from clothiers from Gloucestershire. JPs from the county also wrote to the Council, noting that their clothiers had requested time to depart and prepare 'their reasons & greeifes in writinge vnder their hands', suggesting a preference to have time to prepare a written supplication.⁸⁵ The initiative to petition was thus presented as originating primarily with the clothiers themselves. The JPs reported that

at the Assises holden for this County they and their Workefolcks did Peticion to the Justices of Assize and did deliv[er] vnto them and vs then in writinge somme allegac[i]ons and adv[er]tisem[en]t^s subscribed w[i]th their names.⁸⁶

Once again, this illuminates the process of local petitioning in an atmosphere of national crisis. Petitions were presented at Assizes, and in this instance, channelled by JPs to the Council for further

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ T. Leng, 'Interlopers and Disorderly Brethren at the State Mart: Commercial Regulations and Practices Amongst the Merchant Adventurers of England in the Late Elizabethan Period', *Economic History Review*, 69:3 (2016), p. 831.

⁸⁵ 'Justices of Peace of Gloucestershire to the Council', 13 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 65r.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

consideration, undoubtedly adding a great degree of legitimacy to the complaints contained. Much as London's companies had relied on the authority of the lord mayor and aldermen to bolster their complaints, local officials were clearly expected to perform a similar role in the localities. JPs also proved willing to play on fears of riot and disorder. The JPs described the petition as 'of special weight and consequence', due to the context of the time, as many of the poor 'doe already steale, and are like to starve or doe worse.'⁸⁷ The clothiers had presented their complaints with 'greate Vehemencye' and the JPs informed the Council that they believed their lamentations to be true.⁸⁸

The petition presented by the clothiers survives in a copy, with its original recipients noted as being 'ye Right honor[ab]le S[i]r Humfry Winch & S[i]r William Iones knights his Ma[jes]t[ie]'s Justices of Assize & other his Ma[jes]t[ie]'s Justices of ye Peace.'⁸⁹ The petition dates from 13 March and was forwarded to the Council by these JPs with yet another letter.⁹⁰ They described the petition in an interesting way, as a list of reasons 'expressed in writing subscribed w[i]th their Names.'⁹¹ This clearly was similar in form to the petition presented by clothiers in Oxfordshire, consisting of a signed petitionary report. It contained eleven numbered points with a total of thirty-four names written at the end of the document. This suggests that it exists as a written copy of the original supplication, as the names are not in the form of signatures or marks. That the petition is in third person confirms these suggestions.

Hitherto only Rollison has offered a brief consideration of the contents of this petition within an account of government concern with the unrest sweeping through the realm at this time.⁹² A more thorough examination of the contents of the petition reveals that the points it articulated were just as significant as the government reaction which it illuminates. This petition

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ 'Statements of the clothiers of Gloucestershire and Gloucester to the Council', 13 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 64r.

⁹⁰ 'Sir Hum. Winch and Sir Wm. Jones, Justices of Assize, to the Council', 13 Mar. 1622, TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 63r.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Rollison, 'The Politics of Industry', p. 186.

provides the starkest example of the articulation of anti-Adventurer sentiments within a petition presented by county clothiers. It included eight demands which all cited problems with the Adventurers' Company. In their fourth complaint, the clothiers lamented on the small number of Adventurers, mirroring sentiments expressed by clothiers in Oxfordshire. They noted

that y^e Merchant Adventurers are not sufficient to take off y^e bulk of Cloth made within y^e kingdome because many of them have left off trading, therefore [they] doe humblie praie that more buyers may be admitted therevnto w[hi]^{ch} will enlarge y^e trade, improve y^e Comoditie, advance manufactures, increase y^e number of Merchants, Navigac[i]ons, & his Ma[jes]t[ie]'s Customes, prevent privat[e] combinac[i]ons & practizes & tend to the wealth & honor of their King and his Subjects.⁹³

The clothiers therefore called for an opening up of trade via the admission of more merchants into the Company to increase the number of buyers. They presented this demand in a fashion intended to appeal to authority by citing the increase in customs and navigation which this would occasion. Their suggestion that this would also prevent private combinations appears as a thinly veiled attack on the Adventurers' Company, which was working primarily to preserve its own interests.

The clothiers went further than commenting on the small number of company members. They also criticised the Adventurers' high entry fines, arguing that 'no other Merchants are admitted into y^e Merchants Adventurers companie vpon such reasonable fines as other Companies are in London.'⁹⁴ Lowering the fines and opening the Company would enable more merchants to join, remedying the current stand in cloth. The clothiers also proceeded to attack some of the Company's rules; like clothiers in Suffolk they criticised the stint and the limited shipments of cloth throughout the year. Their ninth point thus complained that the

Merchant Adventurers doe not appoint their Shipping of Cloth above two tymes in y^e yere, contrary to their auncient course, which makes a stand of Cloth, and doth damnifie much y^e Clothier, & wooll grower, & y^e Merchant doth not make aboue two retournes in the yere.⁹⁵

⁹³ TNA, SP 14/128, fo. 64r.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

They also suggested that the Company did not allow its members 'to exceed ye buying of a limited number of Clothes', causing a significant amount of cloth to remain 'vnbought & vnshipt.'⁹⁶ By attacking these policies of the Adventurers, the clothiers were articulating the view that the opening of trade and the increase of shipments of cloth would be the best remedy for its current stand.

The clothiers also criticised the increased powers granted to the Adventurers in the wake of the Cockayne crisis. The petitioners complained that, since the Company's restoration, they had moved to 'prohibit the Stranger to carry white cloth paying double custome' which had proved a 'great hinderance to the Sale of Cloth.'⁹⁷ The Company's new imposition on cloth was also attacked by the clothiers, who vocalised their awareness that this was a direct result of their reincorporation. They noted that these 'unreasonable imposit[i]ons' had been issued 'for the maintenance of their officers & for repayment of great sommes of money payed by them to procure newe priviledges & restraints, as by their owne Charter & confessions will appeare.'⁹⁸ These were so burdensome that even 'manie of their owne companie are discouraged from Trading.'⁹⁹ The clothiers were suggesting that these impositions had also enabled the Company to tighten their monopoly control of the trade via new 'restraints.' The clothiers of Gloucestershire therefore presented their local authorities, and in turn the Privy Council, with a supplication which appeared more as an attack on the Merchant Adventurers than the standard petition pleading economic distress which may be assumed to have been offered to authority at this time.

Whilst the Adventurers were clearly at the centre of complaint, they were not the only merchant company to face some criticisms and attacks via petitions. The year 1622 witnessed a significant decrease in the export of cloth by Eastland Company merchants to the Baltic; their shipments had declined by one half to two-thirds of former levels.¹⁰⁰ This particularly affected the

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Hinton, *Eastland Trade*, p. 24.

export of dyed and dressed cloths produced in Suffolk and Essex.¹⁰¹ In May 1622 a joint petition was presented to the Council by clothiers from both counties complaining that they were 'disabled from going forward in their trade' due to the amount of cloth lying unsold on their hands.¹⁰² This provides an example of the capacity for clothiers from across counties to join to present their supplications, perhaps organised at the local level via contacts at markets or when clothiers made their journeys to Blackwell Hall. The clothiers primarily attacked the Eastland Company and their failure to purchase their cloths for export. Strikingly, the Privy Council did respond to their complaint, declaring that if the merchants continued to drag their feet 'the cloathiers themselves should have free liberty...to ship forth their cloaths into forraine parts.'¹⁰³ By 17 May they gave permission to customs officers to allow the same if the Company had still failed to purchase these cloths.¹⁰⁴ Collective petitions could clearly have tangible effects, leading to the partial opening of this previously monopolised trade.

Despite their attack on a Company which had long been protected by the Crown, the petitions of the clothiers in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Suffolk also prompted a decisive response by the Council, who called on the Adventurers to respond. By 9 April the Company issued an 'Answere and declarac[i]on...vnto certaine points propounded to them by the Bourd' to the King and Council.¹⁰⁵ Whilst the Council order sent to them does not survive, the contents of the Adventurers' response makes clear that they were asked to respond to two main accusations: that their impositions on cloth were a burden and that more merchants should be admitted into their fold. Clearly, the Council was not averse to considering the clothiers' calls for an opening of trade restrictions and a loosening of the Company's monopoly. The Council called on the Company to 'suspend' their imposition until 'Allhollowtide next', and more significantly, to 'giue such way to others not free of our Company' to transport New Draperies out of the port of London to the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *APC*, 38, p. 223.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁰⁵ 'Answer of Merchant Adventurers to the Prince and Council', 9 Apr. 1622, TNA, SP 14/129, fo. 16r.

Company's mart towns.¹⁰⁶ Whilst the clothiers themselves had not expressly requested the freedom to export New Draperies from London, the growing importance of this type of cloth and the fact that it had only recently come under the auspices of the Company's monopoly following their restoration likely meant the Council saw it as a good part of the trade to open. As noted, parliamentary pressure in 1621 had already led to the concession that the outports could freely export New Draperies.

Rather unsurprisingly, the Adventurers did not respond to these requests with much enthusiasm. On the issue of impositions, they reminded king and council 'that the ground and cause of that charge was the some of money w[hi]ch we paid vnto the Kings Ma[jes]tie vpon our restaurac[i]on.'¹⁰⁷ The implication was clear: this would not have been levied if the Company had not been dissolved in the face of the disastrous Cockayne project. They claimed that their new charter allowed them to levy this imposition by a 'speciall clause.'¹⁰⁸ They had taken money from merchants to pay for their re-incorporation via credit; if the imposition designed to repay them were cancelled, this money would immediately be called in and their credit 'instantly overthrowne.'¹⁰⁹ They presented this as something which would only serve to hinder the export of cloth.

The Adventurers responded to the Council's second demand for them to allow 'Interlopers' to enter into the New Drapery trade. They claimed that this was entirely dependent on the Council's decision pertaining to their rights to levy the imposition. If it was found that they could no longer levy it, then they dramatically claimed that 'we shall not be able to subsist any longer in any part of the trade, but must humbly surrender our Charter to his Ma[jes]tie.'¹¹⁰ All would therefore be free to export new and old draperies to the staple towns as they wished. If however they were allowed to continue levying their imposition, they reluctantly accepted the request to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., fo. 16v.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

allow 'Interlopers' to export New Draperies from London.¹¹¹ However they did so on certain conditions, including that merchants not use the liberty granted to 'trade in broad Cloth, Kersies, nor Baies', and that all who entered the trade paid fees and impositions 'as the brethren of our owne Company pay.'¹¹² Whilst they remained steadfast concerning the need to levy their imposition, the Adventurers accepted the necessity of allowing merchants liberty to export New Draperies from London. They also identified the problems in the cloth trade as the fault not of themselves, but of those clothiers who continued to make deceitful cloths.

The Adventurers' response also reveals that they were not ignorant of the petitions which had led the Council to request these demands. They proceeded to include a rhetoric of defence mirroring language present in so many counter-petitions in James's reign. The Company presented the petitions sent by clothiers against them as part of an orchestrated, cross-county petitioning campaign. They stated that

one County calleth to another: and all the clothiers ioyning with the Woollgrowers, Staplers and Interlopers stirre vp the Justices of Assisse to strengthen their Complaints: though there be little cause on their parts, and lesse falt on ours.¹¹³

The Adventurers here attempted to present the supplications as a product of a seditious and deliberate cross-county campaign. The concerns expressed against the Adventurers from Suffolk, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire had contained similarities, focusing especially on the issue of impositions and the restrictive size and nature of its corporate organisation. It is possible that clothiers in these three counties joined and agreed to send separate complaints on these issues to the Council; the collective petition by Suffolk and Essex against the Eastland Company demonstrates the ability for cross-county collaboration, and collective petitions would later be sent by clothiers to the temporary Commission. That the Adventurers acknowledged the possibility of such a campaign attests to an awareness that clothiers could and did communicate across counties.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., fo. 17r

¹¹³ Ibid.

The issue of the Adventurers' impositions and a general desire to loosen the restrictive nature of corporations had also been a key part of parliamentary discourse in 1621. Perhaps knowledge of these debates had led clothiers in various counties to conclude that these two issues were indeed the main causes of the stay of trade, thus deciding to identify these issues within their complaints. The Adventurers ended their response by claiming that these endless petitions were worsening their ability to purchase cloth, as merchants were both 'wearied & discouraged by the resteles Complaints of the Clothiers and Woollgrowers.'¹¹⁴ The petitions were such a burden that they dramatically declared they would rather 'abandon their trade...then thus to remayne vnder the incessant torture & vexation of soe many & soe importunate clamors.'¹¹⁵ Crucially, the Adventurers also offered an opinion as to the chief figures behind this campaign of disinformation: 'the Staplers & Interlopers.'¹¹⁶ They thus used this as an opportunity to direct blame towards not only a rival company but also interlopers, resorting to using a convenient scapegoat so frequently deployed by the Adventurers whenever complaints were directed against them.¹¹⁷ They ended their petition on a rather dramatic note, concluding

If therefore your highnes[s] and Lo[rds]hipps be not satisfied with o[u]r former remonstrances of the inconveniences of the admission of the Interlop[er]s & w[i]th o[u]r iustificac[i]ons against their and the Clothiers & Staplers asp[er]sions: if we be not now found good subiects & necessary members in this Comon Wealth: if there be noe other course to content the Clothiers and their adherents, but by buying vp the Cloth by assessment soe long as they complaine: we shalbe contented...to leaue all and to be vtterly excluded from returning to the trade in the better tymes.¹¹⁸

The Adventurers therefore responded to the complaints issued against them by county clothiers by presenting them as the work of an orchestrated and premeditated campaign, involving their chief rivals: the Staplers and interlopers. By undermining the petitioning campaign against them

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Leng, 'Interlopers', p. 826.

¹¹⁸ TNA, SP 14/129, fo. 17r.

and presenting themselves as necessary agents in the commonwealth the Adventurers hoped to discredit the accusations levied against them.

The Council did not accept the Adventurers' accusations of a seditious petitioning campaign at face value. Instead, they moved to appoint a first commission, the temporary Commission for Trade. On 10 April 1622 the Council wrote to JPs in twenty five clothing counties noting that the King was resolved 'to graunt forth a Comission to certaine Gentlemen to treat and conferr aswell w[i]th the Marchant Adventurers of London, as also w[i]th the most discrete and sufficient Clothiers of every Sheire' to investigate the cause of the decay in trade.¹¹⁹ The Commission had been formed with the express intention of soliciting the opinions of corporations and the clothiers of the realm; petitions sent in the spring had clearly opened the government's eyes to the need to consult with a range of subjects. This was not the first time the Council established commissions of mercantile and government officials to advise on economic matters; between 1621-1624 it appointed numerous commissions to investigate issues including the decay of trade, scarcity of coin, and foreign exchange markets.¹²⁰ As we have seen, the Commission for Glass had acted as an important institution to hear grievances concerning the glass monopolies.

In April 1622, calls for the opinions of subjects went further. Justices were ordered to ensure that two clothiers from their counties appear before the commissioners by 2 May and the Adventurers were also ordered to appoint representatives.¹²¹ By 23 April letters had been sent to

¹¹⁹ 'Letters directed to the High Sherrifes and Justices of Peace of the severall counties...', 10 Apr. 1622, TNA, PC 2/31, fo. 323r.

¹²⁰ Slack, 'Political Economy', pp. 56-8; Suprinyak, 'Trade, Money, and the Grievances of the Commonwealth', pp. 37-43; J. D. Alsop, 'The Privy Council Debate and Committees for Fiscal Reform, September 1615', *Historical Research*, 68:166 (1995), pp. 202-3. See 'Circular letter from the Council to the Mayors etc. of sea-port towns', 11 Sept. 1621, TNA, SP 14/122, fo. 204r; 'Order in Council, appointing a Committee to consider the causes of decay of trade and scarcity of coin', 24 Oct. 1621, TNA, SP 14/123, fo. 73; *APC*, vol. 38, pp. 40, 71, 79-80. For disputes between the commission for exchange markets and our temporary Commission for Trade see Suprinyak, 'Trade, Money, and the Grievances of the Commonwealth', pp. 39-43. For consultation of mercantile opinion throughout Europe, see Tazzara, 'Managing Free Trade', p. 526; R. Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 230.

¹²¹ TNA, PC 2/31, fo. 323r; 'A letter to the Merchant Adventurers', 29 Apr. 1622, TNA, PC 2/31, fo. 337r; 'Justices of Wiltshire to the Council', 30 Apr. 1622, TNA, SP 14/129, fos. 129r-130r.

the twelve commissioners appointed for this task.¹²² These included crown officers such as Solicitor General Sir Robert Heath, Attorney General Thomas Coventry, and the Master of Requests Sir John Suckling. It also included a range of prosperous and experienced London merchants. Sir Paul Pindar, a merchant and diplomat with extensive experience in Venice and Constantinople, was appointed.¹²³ His advice and knowledge on matters of trade had been utilised early in James's reign by Sir Robert Cecil, who relied on his expertise to manage his Italian business affairs, whilst Pindar would later propose the creation of a national bank as a source of loans for James. Thomas Mun, a director of the East India Company and economic writer was also appointed. In 1621 Mun published his *A discourse of trade*, a mercantilist tract which defended the Company from accusations that they exported the realm's bullion, whilst espousing his important theory of the balance of trade.¹²⁴ Other appointees included Sir Richard Sutton, the auditor of the imprests in the Exchequer, Heneage Finch, recorder of London, and Abraham Dawes, a customs farmer and surveyor of the outposts.¹²⁵ The merchant William Turner was also appointed, possibly the same Turner who had sublet Sir Jerome Bowes's early glass patent. The Commission evidently consisted of active London based merchants and officials whose economic expertise made them well suited to advise on the causes of the depression.

The Commissioners were expected to consider 'all particular greevances and obiections w[hi]ch the said Clothiers can make' concerning trade.¹²⁶ This in turn would allow the Commission to become an important space through which clothiers and corporations alike channelled their complaints. In the context of the period, this call for the consultation of subjects is even more interesting. The outbreak of popular discussion on such topics as the Spanish Match had led James

¹²² 'A letter to Sir John Sucklinge, knight...', 23 Apr. 1622, TNA, PC 2/31, fo. 335r.

¹²³ R. Ashton 'Pindar, Sir Paul (1565/6-1650)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/22291> (9 Aug. 2022).

¹²⁴ P. Gauci, 'Mun, Thomas (bap. 1571, d. 1641)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/19527> (9 Aug. 2022).

¹²⁵ For Dawes as a customs farmer under Charles see 'Lord Treasurer Weston to Attorney General Heath', 26 Feb. 1631, TNA, SP 16/185, fo. 100.

¹²⁶ TNA, PC 2/31, fo. 335v.

to issue proclamations in 1620 and 1621 prohibiting discussion of matters of state amongst subjects.¹²⁷ A letter sent to Justices in several circuits in March 1622 saw the Council express concern with the widespread 'licentious' and 'undutifull speech touchinge the secrets of state or government.'¹²⁸ Yet in April 1622 the King and Council seemed more than willing to allow humble clothiers and merchants to advise on economic matters; indeed, they actively solicited this. They seemed less worried that a wider discussion of the realm's economic woes might lead to further criticism of the King. In doing so, they created a new and important point of contact for economic petitioning activity. Hitherto overlooked has been the presentation of petitions by two corporations, the Drapers and Staplers, who made use of the Council's reliance on mercantile knowledge in their attempts to influence policy to suit their own specific agendas.¹²⁹

In May 1622 a petition was sent directly to the commissioners from the 'Drapers of England', and 'preferred by the Drapers of London.'¹³⁰ Its claim to speak for the Drapers of the whole realm was rather dubious and its contents suggest it was a supplication issued by the London Drapers' Company. The Drapers sent two documents to the Commission, the first consisting of a short summary of their petition and the second their detailed supplication.¹³¹ In their summary, the Drapers quickly made clear the issues which they saw as causing the decline in cloth exports. They wished to 'humbly shew that the principall cause of decay of trade...is the false making, dying, and dressing of all sortes of Cloth and woollen manufactures, by men unexperienced' in the realm.¹³² Their main cause of complaint was the sheer number of subjects engaged in the clothing trade, many of whom had not served the full term of seven years of apprenticeship to gain the

¹²⁷ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 495-496, 519-21.

¹²⁸ *APC*, 38, p. 153.

¹²⁹ 'The Clothiers' plan for the improvement of trade', May 1622, *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, pp. 14-15; 'Petition from clothiers of 14 counties', 1622, BL, Stowe MS 354, fo. 65; 'Petition of the Drapers of England to the Commissioners', May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 188r; 'Probable reasons for the decay of the woollen trade; delivered by the mayor and company of merchants of the Staple', 13 May 1622, BL, Cotton Galba E/1, fo. 318r.

¹³⁰ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 188r; Heaton, *Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries*, p. 217.

¹³¹ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 188r; 'Complaint of the Drapers of England to the Commissioners for the cloth trade', May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fos. 189r-191r.

¹³² TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 188r.

necessary experience required. The false cloth they produced was sold throughout the realm by hawkers and exported abroad, causing English cloth to have a bad reputation and diminishing its sales. The Drapers' main request was thus to ensure that all subjects be tied to their proper trades, 'for w[hi]ch they haue bene bound app[re]ntice vnto.'¹³³ They also called for all cloth to be 'viewed and searched' by Justices or other men of quality and sold in open markets, to rectify the continuing deceits which plagued the industry.¹³⁴

The Drapers' petition was titled as 'the Complaintes of the Drap[er]s of this kingdom presented by the Drapers of the Citty of London.'¹³⁵ Interestingly, the Drapers began their petition by engaging with the purpose of the Commission, namely, to hear the testimonies and reports of subjects involved in the cloth trade. They expressed their discontent that they had not been called on by the commissioners to offer advice on the state of trade. In many ways, this reflected their lack of political activity in more recent years, and perhaps also reflects that many of the Company had ceased to engage in the cloth retail trade. Many of the leaders in the Company were active members of the Adventurers' Company, turning their attentions to the export of cloth.¹³⁶ Tom Girtin has found that of 528 freemen paying quarterage fees to the Company in 1624 only 25 were described as drapers.¹³⁷ Yet still they complained that whilst 'the Marchant & clothier are men of speciall Experience in the woollen Manufactures and haue no doubt given great light vnto yo[u]r Hono^{rs} touching the decay of trade', their grievances were 'no less worthie hearing and redresse then any of the rest.'¹³⁸ Whilst the Merchant Adventurers traded almost exclusively in 'whites', the Eastland Company in 'Blewes', and the clothiers in whichever type of cloth they made, it was drapers alone who possessed knowledge 'in all sorts both of Clothe baies and kersies of all natures.'¹³⁹ It was they after all who specialised in the retail of cloths. That the Drapers felt the

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 189r.

¹³⁶ Johnson, *Drapers of London*, p. 180.

¹³⁷ Girtin, *Triple Crowns*, p. 214.

¹³⁸ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 189r.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

need to argue for the importance of their opinions on this issue suggests that they took the initiative to send this petition to the Commission rather than having been invited to give their testimonies. The Commission was clearly seen as a new and important arena through which to channel complaints of this kind, as the Drapers sought to achieve one key aim: the enhancement of their own powers.

The Drapers proceeded by constructing a detailed and sophisticated narrative of the problems facing the clothing trade, culminating in the presentation of themselves as the corporate body best suited to rectify these problems. To do so, they identified many of the same issues as mentioned by clothiers in their earlier petitions, including the exportation of wool, actions of wool middlemen, and even the scarcity of money in the realm.¹⁴⁰ However the chief reasons they identified remained the same as those articulated in their summary, namely the 'Extreme false making of this so necessarie and famous a Comoditie' as the trade had 'fallen into disgrace by vnskillfull men' who had failed to serve apprenticeships.¹⁴¹ They included a list of the 'Incoragements w[hi]ch by daily Experience we finde, Annimating men to these great abuses', and potential remedies for these problems.¹⁴² They did not attack the Adventurers. As many members were involved in the cloth export trade themselves this is unsurprising. The Drapers did however make mention to the grant of Alnager held by the Duke of Lennox, a patent which had been complained of in many of James's parliaments.¹⁴³ The holder of the office was expected to search and seal cloth to ensure its quality and fitness for sale, but in reality, Lennox had used corruption in his execution of the office by selling the seals straight to clothiers for financial gain. The Drapers thus complained of the 'remisnes and Coruption of the Alinger...whom we shall Easely finde guiltie, All sortes of Cloath being founde defectiue, yet sealed with the Allnagers Seale.'¹⁴⁴ The false making

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., fos. 189r-v.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., fo. 189r.

¹⁴² Ibid., fo. 189v.

¹⁴³ Price, *English Patents*, p. 27; L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), p. 437.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 189v.

of cloth was likely a grievance shared by company leaders and retailing members given its detrimental effects on both the cloth export and domestic retail trades.

The Drapers also used the opportunity to lament problems facing their retailing members as cloth was sold by chapmen and strangers outside of open markets. Cloth had become one commodity bartered by false makers who exchanged the same for bread or for beer thus abusing 'the drap[er]s of Corporations and such as haue no other trade but the sale of cloath to live by.'¹⁴⁵ This had drawn customers away from drapers' shops, causing the 'vtter disabling of them' and 'thousands that depend vppon them.'¹⁴⁶ To remedy these problems, the Drapers called on the Commission to ensure that all cloth was sold in public markets. This would help to prevent the intrusion in the trade of 'Packing Cloathworkers drawers and other meane people' including factors in London who encouraged the false making of cloth, supplying this to 'Strangers of all Nations' to vent abroad.¹⁴⁷ The Drapers also noted the wider effects of changes in fashion on the demand for cloth in the realm, including the decline in the wearing of gowns and petticoats of cloth by women and strangers.¹⁴⁸ The Drapers' retailing trade had clearly been affected by changes in demand and the intrusion in their trade of other subjects. They thus used their petition as an opportunity to express their own concerns, presenting these as the key cause of the depression.

In their response to the issue of company organisation and the regulation of trade, the Drapers did not attack the Adventurers' Company. Instead, their complaint called for the tightening of controls and restrictions on trade, whilst stressing their own importance as a company and the strong apprenticeship system they maintained. This suggests that the petition was indeed sponsored by the larger Drapers' Company. The Drapers had long been concerned with the decline of apprentices in its own ranks, as many drapers were bound to masters in different companies or failed to serve apprenticeships at all.¹⁴⁹ Their trade had increasingly been practiced by freemen

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., fo. 190r.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., fo. 191r.

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, *Drapers of London*, ii, p. 168.

from other companies and by foreigners and strangers.¹⁵⁰ Their petition was used as an opportunity to voice their concerns with these developments. To do so the Drapers articulated an anger against aliens and denizens who engaged in the trade by purchasing their city freedoms. They thus engaged with contextual concerns surrounding employment opportunities and anti-alien sentiments, mirroring the inclusion of such demands in the campaign against Mansell's glass monopoly. They claimed that the influx of the unapprenticed in the trade had caused the overthrow of many sons of the gentry who had intended to serve apprenticeships with drapers. As a consequence, 'the Misteries of those Exelent Trades' had been 'Exposed; to the Commons.'¹⁵¹ The Drapers proceeded to complain that many of these outsiders 'ouerthrow or Excedingly mayme the Marchaunts who are free of p[ar]ticule' Companies' as strangers were often free from some of the burdens facing native merchants, for example the restraints on times of shipping, and thus able to 'supplie the market before the Marchant com[e] at it.'¹⁵² Their petition thus included some anti-alien sentiments as they moved to suggest the benefits of their strong, corporate control over the cloth trade.

The Drapers contrasted this picture of a disordered and crowded trade with the benefits they brought to it as a principal corporation in the clothing industry. They described their trade as 'the principall pillar of woollen manufactures' claiming that 'all Cloathworkers & dyers are sett at worke by them.'¹⁵³ In a clear example of rival companies jostling for authority and prestige, they presented themselves as 'the true Merchant of the Staple, more woollen Comodities luying contynewally in drap[er]s hands then in any Company of Marchants.'¹⁵⁴ They proceeded to appeal to their own privileges as a company, arguing that cloth should once again be 'mannaged bought and sould by Marchants to Exporte and drap[er]s by whole sale and reta[i]le' and 'the whole government of Blackwell Hall' to be 'at the desposing of the M[aste]r and wardens of the society of

¹⁵⁰ Girtin, *Triple Crowns*, p. 214.

¹⁵¹ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 190v.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., fo. 191r.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

the drap[er]s as by records appereth.¹⁵⁵ As previously noted, the Drapers had previously held searches at Blackwell Hall, although evidence suggests that they no longer actively searched cloths there.¹⁵⁶ This thus appears as a plea to regain their lost power and monopoly control over both the searching and retail of cloth in the city.

At the end of their petition, the Drapers directly engaged with the clothiers' frequent complaints of the small number of merchants engaged in the trade. They noted that

where[as] Clothiers complaine they lacke sale, and suggest that yf all were buyers it would be better, We conceaue they are mightely mistaken, and could not want Marketts to Carry away there Cloath yf the letts and hindrances mencioned were remoued by your Honorable wisdoms.¹⁵⁷

The Drapers thus expressed their disagreement with calls for the opening of trade, instead suggesting that the main problem was that the 'misteries' of the trade had been made open to all. By stressing their own importance to the cloth trade, the Drapers were using this petition as an attempt to gain a reinforcement of their controls and privileges. Their description of a chaotic industry made worse by an influx of inexperienced workers attempted to present the clothiers calls for a more open trade as misguided, turning this on its head to present a necessity for a return to a more tightly regulated trade. Company control, with its rules and apprenticeships, posed the best way to remedy the false making of cloth.

The temporary Commission for Trade had provided an ideal opportunity for this corporate body to lament its own declining position and authority, calling for a re-enforcement of its old powers to search cloths at Blackwell Hall. Yet the Drapers also engaged with the contemporary concern with the benefits of restrictive corporate governance, appealing not to desires for a loosening of restrictions, but to the notions of order and regulation which underpinned the whole

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Johnson, *Drapers of London*, iii, p. 90; Girtin, *Triple Crowns*, p. 214.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 191r.

corporate system.¹⁵⁸ It was they, and not the Adventurers or Staplers, who held the antidote to remedy these ills. Whilst the Drapers have often been regarded as rather politically inactive in the seventeenth century, their appeal to the Commission suggests that some company members, perhaps spurred on by the context of depression, took the initiative to lament problems in the trade whilst appealing for a greater role for the Company in the realm's cloth trade.

By May 1622 the Drapers also sent a 'humble Answer' to the Council. Information surrounding its production is scant, but they seem to have addressed concerns expressed by the Clothworkers' Company that they were attempting to monopolise the cloth retail trade.¹⁵⁹ Even here the Drapers defended their role, presenting themselves as the best corporation to oversee the same. Possibly the Clothworkers had been made aware of the Drapers' petition to the Commission, triggering concerns that they were reaching for further powers for the searching and selling of cloth.

The Drapers were not the only corporation to utilise the opportunities presented by the Commission. Hitherto unnoticed is a petition and report presented by the 'Maior and Companie' of the Merchants of the Staple.¹⁶⁰ The power of the Staplers had faced further blows in James's reign. Their activities as wool middlemen had been challenged in 1614; a proclamation banning the export of English wools abroad meant that members could not justify their selling of cloths in England under the pretence that they were retailing 'refuse' wools.¹⁶¹ The Company even attempted to monopolise the domestic wool industry. By June 1616 they were allowed to continue to act as middlemen in the wool trade as an experiment for the space of one year.¹⁶² Like so many other artisans and merchants, they even proved willing to strike a deal with monopolists, entering into an alliance with Viscount Fenton and Roger Gwynn in 1617, who held a patent to collect fines

¹⁵⁸ Stern, 'Companies: Monopoly, Sovereignty, and the East Indies', pp. 187-9.

¹⁵⁹ 'Answer made to the Council by the Drapers of London', May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fos. 192r-193v.

¹⁶⁰ Cotton Galba, E/1, fos. 318r-323r.

¹⁶¹ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 317-19; Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, pp. 164-5.

¹⁶² Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, p. 168.

from illegal wool middlemen.¹⁶³ The Company attempted to bring all wool-dealers into their fold for high entrance fees of as much as £100. In return for ensuring none dealt in wool outside the auspices of their company, the Staplers provided the patentees with these entrance fees. This agreement was revoked by the Commons in 1621, regarded as a contributing factor for the decline in the number of wool buyers and wool prices.¹⁶⁴ In the same parliament, the Staplers had also attempted in vain to persuade the Commons to allow them to enter the cloth export trade.¹⁶⁵

By 1622 the Staplers were therefore in a particularly weak position. Yet they were still actively approached to offer their opinions on the causes of the depression. Their report had been written, they claimed, ‘vpon comaund of the right hono[ra]ble Sir John Suckling Kn[igh]t and other his Ma[jes]t[ie]s Comissioners.’¹⁶⁶ Their response was presented in the form of a neutral report listing the ‘Probable Reasons of the decay of Cloth’, yet it also included petitionary requests and language. It thus blurred the lines between report and petition, as the Staplers attempted to present their response as an objective piece of expert advice, whilst using the opportunity this presented to push their own interests and influence policy.¹⁶⁷ Throughout they embraced the opportunity to attack their long-standing rivals, the Adventurers. To do so, they actively shaped their rhetoric and arguments to mirror the anti-Adventurer attacks made by clothiers in March and expressed in the parliamentary debates of 1621. Clearly, a process of ‘feedback’ between parliamentary discourse and petitioning complaints was at work.

In their very first point the Staplers identified the ‘ingrossing and monopolizing of the cheifest trades of the kingdome’ as a key cause of the decay of trade, citing not only the ‘trade of exporting Clothe into highe and lowe Germany’, but also the trades ‘to Muscouia, Russia,

¹⁶³ See Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 365-9; Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, pp. 166-73; Rich, *Ordinance Book*, pp. 78-86.

¹⁶⁴ Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, pp. 173-4.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Reasons in behalf of the bill in Parliament to restore the Merchants of the Staple their trade of exporting cloth’, 26 Apr. 1621, TNA, SP 14/120, fos. 170r-171r.

¹⁶⁶ Cotton Galba E/1, fo. 318r.

¹⁶⁷ For the importance of such actions in Europe, see C. Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 159-62.

Greenland, and the like into the hands of some particular Companies of Merchants.¹⁶⁸ They articulated their belief that such merchants had demonstrated their 'inability to mannage trade.'¹⁶⁹ Significantly, the Staplers also proceeded to criticise the enhancement of the Adventurers' powers in the wake of the Cockayne project. They lamented that

The Merchants adventurers haue monopolized and ingrossed much more trade into their hands by Culler of their last l[ett]res patents then euer heretofore, for they haue taken to themselues the sole power of exporting all white Clothes, Cullored Clothes, Kersies, bayes, sayes, serges, p[er]petuanoes and all other new draperies...w[i]th power to punish the persons and Confiscate the goods of any other Englishe merchants that shall vse any part of that trade...¹⁷⁰

The Staplers thus complained of the exclusion of strangers from the export of white cloths as well as the Adventurers' new control over the New Draperies.

The Staplers also responded to the Adventurers' increased powers to punish interlopers. They claimed that many merchants had since been 'prosecuted by the Merchant adventurers', some being 'imprisoned vntill they would either bee bounde to forbear trading or...forsweare trading.'¹⁷¹ The Staplers offered a self-serving narrative of the effects of these changes, making references to the consequences of these changes for their own members. They claimed that, prior to this point, they and other merchants had exported 'either Cloth or woll or both' but were now restrained from doing so.¹⁷² They proceeded to claim that the Adventurers had 'vsurped power and authority' from the Merchants of the Staple, an 'ancient' and 'memorable company' who had existed since the reign of Edward I.¹⁷³ They claimed that as many as forty grants had been bestowed on the Company by the King's predecessors.¹⁷⁴ The petitioners therefore articulated a clear disdain with the influence and power of the Company which had caused this vital trade 'formerly

¹⁶⁸ Cotton Galba E/1, fo. 318r.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., fos. 318r-v.

¹⁷² Ibid., fo. 318v.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

distributed amongst many other Merchants' to now reside in the hands of the 'Merchant adventurer only.'¹⁷⁵

The complaint of the Staplers continued by attacking other aspects of the Adventurers' monopoly. It echoed sentiments expressed by clothiers, complaining of the 'small number' of the Company and the irony that they should 'haue sole power ouer soe great a busines.'¹⁷⁶ They also saw this as particularly problematic in the face of the current trade crisis, questioning how a corporation of such small numbers could possibly hope to 'mannage a greater trade in most troublesome times.'¹⁷⁷ The Staplers also engaged with the argument that false cloths were being made in the realm. Contrary to the arguments of the Drapers and Adventurers, they blamed this not on the proliferation of unapprenticed cloth makers or the clothiers but on the Adventurers' monopoly itself. They argued that it was impossible 'that so few Merchants can searche and visit euery Cloth as it ought to be done.'¹⁷⁸ This 'incourageth the Clothier to adventure to make false Cloth.'¹⁷⁹

Decreases in the demand for English cloths were also presented as resulting from the 'charges and impositions' placed on cloth both abroad and at home by the Adventurers. These additional duties had provoked 'forreine nations to make soe much Cloth of their owne and to neglect and allmost vtterlie abandon ours.'¹⁸⁰ Criticisms were also directed at both the stint and limited number of departures of ships laden with cloth. The Staplers mirrored complaints present in previous petitions on this point but played on the concerns of authority by suggesting that such a system was decaying England's maritime strength. They argued that the Adventurers' monopoly 'hinders the nauigation & nauigators', as 'restrayning so great a trade to one Companie of Merchants that onlie from London twice or thrice in the yeare doe hire a few shippes to carry their

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., fo. 319r.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., fo. 319v.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Clothe' caused the decay of the 'ancient abundance of shipping and saylers' which the realm had previously enjoyed.¹⁸¹ Interestingly, the petitioners proceeded to articulate a view of trading regulation more reminiscent of attacks articulated by the outports. The Staplers proceeded boldly to claim that

limiting trade to one Company, and so by consequence to so small a number residing for the most part at one port as at London is a generall prejudice to the whole Kingdome for it inforceth needeles and chargeable carriage and recarriage of duiers Comodities.¹⁸²

This was a burden for clothiers living in 'remote parts of the land' who were forced to sell their wares via London.¹⁸³ It also meant that other ports were left 'almost desolate & forsaken' as London was privileged above all other places.¹⁸⁴ The Staplers went further, articulating suggestions for a freer trade. In the current system, 'some few Englishe Merchants haue indeavoured to ingrosse so muche traffique to themselues', causing cloth to lie on the clothiers' hands, exports to be limited, and home manufactures to decay.¹⁸⁵ By contrast, 'in forreine parts where more freedome of trade is allowed, their trades are there improved manufactures and their natiue Comodities advaunced' whilst their 'nauies [are] augmented.'¹⁸⁶

The articulation of free trade sentiments by the Staplers must be read as part of their campaign to regain their own lost authority; they were far from genuine. As argued by Leng, calls for a free trade became an important and flexible discursive mechanism used to garner support for a variety of causes from the early seventeenth century.¹⁸⁷ We have seen how they were even used by disgruntled glassmakers when petitioning parliament in 1621. The Staplers' report provides us with another example of this in action, as the Company drew on such prevailing sentiments to push

¹⁸¹ Ibid., fos. 319v-320r.

¹⁸² Ibid., fo. 319v.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., fo. 320v.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ T. Leng, "'His neighbours land mark": William Sykes and the Campaign for "Free Trade" in Civil War England', *Historical Research*, 86:232 (2013), p. 251. Also see Malament, "'Economic Liberalism'", pp. 1350-1.

their own economic agenda. They thus requested permission to join the cloth export trade and for all staple ports to be brought under their authority. They requested that ‘the Merchants of ye Staple may bee Continued in their ancient right of shipping Cloth and all other manufactures made of wooll.’¹⁸⁸ They proceeded to call for the Adventurers’ Company to be made more open, requesting that all merchant companies be made to accept merchants upon ‘reasonable fines.’¹⁸⁹ This was necessary as experience had shown that ‘many hands make light worke.’¹⁹⁰ The reasons for these requests were again skilfully presented as emanating from a concern with the commonwealth rather than benefitting the Company’s private interests. These changes would allow the enlargement of trade, the end of the deceitful making of cloth, the improvement of staple ports, and the increase of England’s maritime strength. The Staplers thus responded to the opportunity to address the Commission for Trade by framing their own requests in the guise of a neutral report intended to inform commissioners of problems in the realm. In reality, its purpose remained self-interested: to re-establish their influence in the cloth trade.

The commissioners responded to the Staplers’ lamentations. Attached to the surviving petition is a list of questions posed by the commissioners in response to the Staplers’ requests and further answers by the Company.¹⁹¹ This provides insight into the workings of the temporary Commission, which clearly engaged with the opinions with which it was being presented, sometimes gathering multiple reports from the same group. The commissioners were also clearly not concerned with protecting the Adventurers’ monopoly powers at all costs, perhaps reflective of the fact that no major governors of the Company sat as commissioners. They thus asked the Staplers to provide further evidence for their claims, including to expand on the precise points in the Adventurers’ charter which ‘hathe bin enforced to the hurt of the Merchants of the Staple, and other Merchants.’¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Cotton Galba E/1, fo. 320v.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., fo. 321r.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., fos. 322r-323r.

¹⁹² Ibid., fo. 322r.

In response, the Staplers repeated their assertion that the Adventurers had new powers to punish and imprison all who were not free of their company.¹⁹³ The Adventurers' enhanced powers were presented as contrary to their charter, which had contained a proviso promising to exempt the Merchants of the Staple from its privileges.¹⁹⁴ They thus repeated their wish to be allowed to export cloths abroad. The Staplers were also requested to provide further details on how exactly 'the trade of exporting of Cloth may be assisted and enlarged by the Merchants of the Staple', showing that the Commission was taking seriously the possibility of allowing them a greater share in the trade.¹⁹⁵ The Staplers responded by presenting their involvement as a necessary means to solve the glut of cloths now burdening the English market. To do so, they engaged with concerns expressed from as early as the parliament of 1604 that the Adventurers were a small Company, dominated by Londoners. Whilst they could not provide exact figures as to how many of their own number would export cloth, they suggested that merchants from across the outports would 'bee restored to trade as fully and freely as any of the Merchants of the Staple of this port of London.'¹⁹⁶ The implication could not be clearer; unlike the Adventurers they were not to be a monopolising body based chiefly in London. Like the Starchmakers in 1608, they suggested that they would be a large and open corporate body. They repeated their requests to be given a 'libertie to trade' in cloths, whilst also suggesting that imposing limits on cloth exports was contrary to the 'rule of free trade.'¹⁹⁷

Both the Drapers and the Staplers therefore used the opportunities created by the temporary Commission, and its attempt to solicit expert advice, to direct petitions and reports to a new body of authority, perceived as possessing enough power to help restore their lost authorities in the clothing trade. To do so, these interested groups engaged with concerns

¹⁹³ Ibid., fo. 322v.

¹⁹⁴ Their earlier charter of 1564 had included this as Burghley had indeed promised that the charter would not harm the Staplers, see 'Sir Wm. Cecil to Sir Tho. Offeley', 25 May 1564, TNA, SP 12/34, fo. 31.

¹⁹⁵ Cotton Galba E/1, fo. 322r.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, fo. 323r.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., fos. 322v-323r.

surrounding the issue of corporate regulation of trade, using this as a framework through which to launch arguments in favour of their own interests.

Clothiers also embraced the opportunity to address the Commission for Trade. One petition from an unnamed group of clothiers survives and is dated to April-May 1622.¹⁹⁸ A manuscript copy of the petition gives some clue to its geographical origins, providing figures of unsold cloths remaining in Kent, Suffolk, Essex, and Somerset.¹⁹⁹ It is likely that the petition was written by clothiers from these counties. The document once again mirrors the hybrid form of report/petition as adopted by the Staplers. Its first half consisted of a list of numbered remedies, before proceeding to offer a humble supplication concerning their own specific needs. These clothiers made dramatic calls for the cloth trade to be made free to all subjects, expressing concern with the effects of strict monopoly control. Heretofore, only Cooper and Gould have briefly noted the important calls for free trade made by clothiers within the context of crisis.²⁰⁰ In the crisis of 1587, clothiers had called for the opening of the cloth trade and criticised the Adventurers' Company.²⁰¹ By 1622, they repeated these sentiments whilst engaging more broadly with larger debates surrounding corporate regulation and free trade. Within their supplication the clothiers requested that

there may be liberty of trade granted to all his Majesty's loving subjects to buy and vent woollen cloth into any foreign parts beyond the seas, or that the ancient and hereditary right of shipping cloth may be restored unto the merchants of the Staple, and that it may be lawful for any man to come into their company upon such rates as have been anciently allowed.²⁰²

Whilst not explicitly attacking the Adventurers' Company, the clothiers articulated their wish for an opening of the cloth export trade. Their request that the Staplers be allowed to export cloth may have reflected the clothiers' absolute disdain for the Adventurers and awareness that some degree

¹⁹⁸ 'Clothiers' plan', *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹⁹ BL, Stowe MS 354, fos. 63r-64v.

²⁰⁰ Cooper, 'Economic Regulation', p. 78; Gould, 'Crisis', p. 221.

²⁰¹ Gould, 'Crisis', p. 214.

²⁰² 'Clothiers' plan', *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, p. 14.

of corporate regulation was necessary to order trade. In reality, the Staplers had far less experience in the cloth trade than the Adventurers. However, they still suggested that control of the trade was better handed to the Staplers than to the vexatious Adventurers. It is also possible that these clothiers were allied with the Staplers: perhaps the latter had solicited their support as part of their larger campaign to regain their lost powers. After all, the Adventurers had made claims of such an alliance in the spring of 1622; it was not beyond the realm of possibility. The clothiers proceeded to attack other patents and restraints on trade, engaging with themes and issues discussed in the parliament of 1621. They thus attacked patents for dyes whilst also articulating a concern with the East India Company's export of bullion.²⁰³

The second half of the clothiers' report reads as a more traditional petitionary appeal, albeit one which skilfully played on the threat of unrest. The clothiers called on the commissioners to remember that they did 'employ a great number of poor people' including the young and sick, whose livelihoods depended on the labour they could supply.²⁰⁴ They thus left it to the commissioners to consider how difficult it would be 'to contain them from mutiny and rebellion.'²⁰⁵ They admitted that the poor had been in such dire straits already that they had been forced to 'commit many robberies both by day and night', especially of corn supplies from markets.²⁰⁶ They suggested that further disorders would be 'out of the compass of our power to prevent' without decisive action by the Commission, citing their own fear to return to their counties 'without hopes of sudd[en] reformation.'²⁰⁷ Clearly, these clothiers were absent from their counties and most likely

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. This claim was not an exaggeration. By June 1622, JPs in Gloucestershire were reporting to the Council a rumour that 500 subjects were planning on verbally petitioning them with 'staves readye', see 'Statement of Sir William Guise', 1 June 1622, TNA, SP 14/131, fo. 5r; 'Justices of Gloucestershire to the Council', 1 June 1622, TNA, SP 14/131, fo. 4r.

²⁰⁷ 'Clothiers' plan', *Seventeenth-Century Documents*, p. 15.

present in London to attend on the Commission, using written petitions as well as physical appearances before the commissioners collectively to present their cause.²⁰⁸

Other clothiers also embraced these opportunities to present their lamentations through collective petitions, including clothiers from fourteen counties including Worcestershire, Wiltshire, and Shropshire.²⁰⁹ The clothiers made clear that they had been commanded by the Council and their JPs to attend the commissioners, causing them with a 'generall & vnanimous consent' to present their grievances as a collective petition.²¹⁰ They referred to the 'bottomless pitt of remediles destruction' they had faced, assigning this to multiple causes, chief of which was the 'contraction & extenuation of ovr trade by reson of charters graunted to particuler companies.'²¹¹ They included a direct reference to the duties levied by companies, in what can only be read as an attack on the Adventurers. They lamented the charges

as are imposed by y^e Companies themselues for the susteyning of theyr monopoly and they are eyther ordinary for y^e mayntenance of theyr government & politie or extraordinarie for y^e payment of theyr debts.²¹²

These impositions were designed to maintain the 'monopoly' of the Adventurers' Company. The clothiers also included a precise list of the various charges imposed on cloth as had been 'proved in y^e p[ar]liament howse' in 1621.²¹³ These clothiers had acquired knowledge of the debates concerning the decay of the cloth trade which had occurred in the Commons in 1621. This was possible through numerous means; they may have heard verbal reports of the debates from a

²⁰⁸ Notes made by Heath suggest that meetings were held, see 'Notes [by Sir Robt. Heath] of the opinions of merchants of different counties', 6 May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fos. 35r-36r; 'Notes on reasons of and remedies for decay of cloth trade', c. May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fos. 194r-195v. Kopperman mistakenly suggested only the notes of May 6th survived from these meetings, see Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath*, p. 111.

²⁰⁹ BL, Stowe MS 354, fo. 65.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fo. 65r.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, fo. 65v.

contact, heard the news at Blackwell Hall, or even consulted manuscript notes of proceedings.²¹⁴ Knowledge of these debates allowed the clothiers to present a more sophisticated petition than that of the unnamed clothiers described above, complete with figures and empirical evidence of the burdens facing the clothing industry. Their petition also contained less emotive language than the first petition sent by clothiers; petitioners based their arguments on facts gathered through parliamentary debates. At some points their arguments were radical; they even suggested the need to dissolve the East India Company, repeating parliamentary concerns that it was responsible for the export of silver from the realm.²¹⁵ This remarkable petition offers yet another example of clothiers joining from across counties to petition the temporary Commission for Trade in a supplication clearly shaped by previous parliamentary debates and discussions.

The temporary Commission for Trade thus emerged as an important space for the presentation of supplications and reports as the Crown and the Council actively solicited the opinion of subjects to establish the causes of the depression. On 22 June the Commission presented a final written report to the Council in which they identified a list of reasons for the decay of trade.²¹⁶ Scholars have frequently analysed the report for the types of remedies it offered.²¹⁷ The degree to which this report was based on the actual opinions of subjects has been noted by Supple who has described it as a 'résumé of contemporary opinion.'²¹⁸ A comparison between the petitions analysed and the final report adds to this conclusion, showing that many of its findings had been articulated to commissioners via the abovementioned petitions. The report frequently cited the opinions gathered from clothiers, gentry, and custom house officials; it embraced and celebrated that its conclusions had come directly from those subjects best placed to comment on the problems in trade. In total it offered a list of eight causes for the decay of the vent of cloth before offering

²¹⁴ Millstone, *Manuscript Circulation*, pp. 96-100.

²¹⁵ BL, Stowe MS 354, fo. 65v.

²¹⁶ 'Committee for the cloth trade to the Council', 22 June 1622, TNA, SP 14/131, fos. 73r-77v.

²¹⁷ Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, pp. 417-24; Hinton, *Eastland Trade*, pp. 27-31; Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath*, pp. 111-12.

²¹⁸ Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, p. 66.

remedies. Causes cited included the export of English wools abroad, the false making of cloth, and the increase in cloth making in foreign countries. The Drapers' concern that cloth was not being worn by subjects was directly responded to through the commissioners' recommendation that English cloth be worn at funerals and that a proclamation be issued ordering apprentices and servants to wear the same.²¹⁹

The report also engaged with concerns surrounding the Adventurers and corporate regulation, not shying away from this sensitive issue. Its fifth reason for the decay in trade referred to

the pollicyes of the Merchant Adventurers, Which drawe vpon them suspition of Combinac[i]on in tradinge; and the Smalenes of their Nombre w[hi]^{ch} nowe doe vsuallie buye and vent Clothe; and the like pollicyes of other merchants, whoe are not able or willinge to extend themselues in this tyme of extremitie to take of the Clothe from the hande of the Clothier.²²⁰

The commissioners thus included complaints pertaining to the small and limited nature of the Adventurers' Company. However whilst they acknowledged that companies were 'spoken against by many', they still stressed the need for the good government and order of trade which regulated companies could provide.²²¹ This is reflective of the continued support for corporations in economic life; even outspoken opponents of monopolies maintained the need for corporate governance and regulation of trade to prevent disorder.²²² This was reflected in the commissioners' recommendation for the establishment of a scheme to create new clothing corporations in different shires.²²³ However, they did admit that some forms of corporate organisation were a hinderance to the commonwealth, including 'such as drawe w[i]th them Suspici[i]on of Combinac[i]on either in buying at home or sellenge abroad.'²²⁴ They also articulated a disdain with

²¹⁹ TNA, SP 14/131, fo. 77r.

²²⁰ Ibid., fo. 73v.

²²¹ Ibid., fo. 75r.

²²² Malament, "Economic Liberalism", p. 1352.

²²³ This had been proposed by a projector named Walter Morrell as early as 1616. See M. Zell, 'Walter Morrell and the New Draperies Project, c. 1603-1631', *Historical Journal*, 44:3 (2001), p. 669.

²²⁴ TNA, SP 14/131, fo. 75r.

joint-stock companies, exempting only the East India Company given the dangerous nature of the trade.²²⁵ Whilst regulated companies allowed multiple subjects to trade on their own accounts, they argued that in a joint-stock organisation 'it is as if one man alone were the Adventurer and Buyer.'²²⁶ As trade was conducted by joint-stock companies as one entity, they were regarded as more monopolistic in organisation, restricting the enterprise of individuals.²²⁷

Despite this, the commissioners did engage with some of the more precise attacks launched against the Adventurers' monopoly powers. Responding to charges that it was far too small in size, they proposed that all merchants should be allowed to join the Company for entrance fines of no more than five marks.²²⁸ They also responded to concerns with the Adventurers' impositions on cloth, calling for the removal of the same and even suggesting that no company of merchants be allowed to issue similar impositions 'w[i]thout the Allowance of the State.'²²⁹ The commissioners also recommended a particularly significant change for the supervision of mercantile companies going forward. They proposed that

the Orders and Constituc[i]ons of the Companies of Merchants (in whome the publike hath so greate an Interest) either alreadye or hereafter to be made, be surveyed and approved by a Committee to be appointed by his Ma[jes]^{tie} for that purpose. To the Ende they may putt noe such Ordinances in Execuc[i]on, w[hi]^{ch} shall tende more to their private then to the publike good.²³⁰

They here called for the appointment of a committee to survey and review the ordinances imposed by mercantile corporations. In doing so, the commissioners proved themselves receptive to concerns expressed by the clothiers and Staplers that such corporations often pursued private interests at the expense of the commonwealth. This marks an important point in perceptions of

²²⁵ Ibid., fo. 75v.

²²⁶ Ibid., fo. 75r.

²²⁷ Similar sentiments had been used by Sir Edwin Sandys to attack the Muscovy Company in 1604, see Ashton, 'Parliamentary Agitation', p. 48.

²²⁸ TNA, SP 14/131, fo. 75r.

²²⁹ Ibid., fo. 74v.

²³⁰ Ibid., fo. 75r.

company organisation, as anti-company sentiments expressed within petitions ultimately influenced the final report delivered to the King and Council. Clothiers and company members alike had used the opportunities posed by this new forum to articulate their grievances to a body which proved remarkably receptive to their complaints.

The petitions, reports, and final recommendations of the temporary Commission did not fall on deaf ears. Throughout the summer of 1622, James and the Council took active measures to respond to these recommendations. On 28 July the export of wool was forbidden by proclamation and subjects were ordered to wear woollen cloths at funerals.²³¹ Dealing with the false dyeing of cloths, the proclamation prohibited the use of dyeing materials such as logwood in the realm. The Dyers' Company were even given full authority to search and seize all illegal logwood. This proclamation publicly informed subjects of the work of the temporary Commission who had had 'conference with divers' to produce their report.²³² This public celebration of the consultation of subjects certainly came as a marked contrast to the King and Council's attitude to the voicing of humble opinion on the Spanish Match.

Perhaps most importantly, the temporary Commission had also proposed the creation of a permanent Commission for Trade to aid the Council by hearing all future disputes concerning the cloth trade. In the proclamation of 28 July, James publicly announced his intention to appoint this Commission to confer on similar issues going forward.²³³ This is also suggestive of a wider acceptance of the usefulness of commissions to investigate economic matters and as spaces for conflict resolution; as early as May 1622 proposals had been made to appoint a separate commission to hear complaints surrounding the New Drapery trade.²³⁴

By 28 September the proposed Commission for Trade was appointed. It consisted of the same individuals who had served on the temporary Commission including an additional thirty-nine

²³¹ Kopperman, *Sir Robert Heath*, p. 112; Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 545-9.

²³² Larkin and Hughes, I, p. 546.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

²³⁴ 'Suggested regulations, to be established by proclamation...for redress of deceits in new draperies', May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 196.

men.²³⁵ It was to be headed by Henry Montagu, lord president of the Council, and included other crown officials including Sir Julius Caesar and Ralph Freeman. Montagu had previously served as recorder of London and by 1620 had investments in five different joint-stock enterprises.²³⁶ His mercantile experience and strong links to the city account for his appointment. Both the president of the Council of the North, Lord Scrope, and the president of the Council of Wales, William Compton the earl of Northampton, were also appointed. The antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton was even a commissioner, presumably for his skills in research and ability to draw on precedents for financial matters.²³⁷ Sir George Paule, a commissioner for starch, was also a member and may well have owed his appointment to his patron Buckingham.²³⁸ Individuals with a keen interest and involvement in trade were selected, including the East India and Virginia Company member Sir Dudley Digges and the Virginia and Somerset Island Company member Sir Edward Sackville.²³⁹ London's merchants were again well-represented. Pindar, Robson, and Dawes remained commissioners. New merchants appointed including Henry Garway, a farmer of the customs and member of the Drapers' Company, for whom he would later be elected as a warden in 1623.²⁴⁰ Clearly, the Drapers had succeeded in ensuring that their voice was represented in further investigations. Sir John Wolstenholme, one of the city's wealthiest merchants and an active member of the East India and Virginia Companies, was made a commissioner.²⁴¹ Anthony Abdy and

²³⁵ Commission from the King', Sep. 1622, TNA, SP 14/133, fos. 38r-50r; 'Copy of commission', 28 Sept. 1622, TNA, SP 14/133, fos. 61r-76r.

²³⁶ B. Quintrell, 'Montagu, Henry, first earl of Manchester (c. 1564-1642)', *ODNB* (Jan., 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/19020> (9 Aug. 2022)

²³⁷ S. Handley, 'Cotton, Sir Robert Bruce, first baronet (1571-1631)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/6425> (9 Aug. 2022).

²³⁸ S. Wright, 'Paule, Sir George (1563-1635)', *ODNB* (May, 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/21610> (9 Aug. 2022).

²³⁹ S. Kelsey, 'Digges, Sir Dudley (1582/3-1639)', *ODNB* (Sept., 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/7635> (9 Aug. 2022); A. Davidson and B. Coates, 'SACKVILLE, Sir Edward (1590-1652), of South Berwick, Suss', *HoP*, I, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/sackville-sir-edward-1590-1652> (9 Aug. 2022).

²⁴⁰ A. McConnell and R. Brown, 'Garway [Garraway], Sir Henry (bap. 1575, d. 1646)', *ODNB* (May, 2007), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/10405> (9 Aug. 2022).

²⁴¹ J. K. Loughton and H. V. Bowen, 'Wolstenholme, Sir John (1562-1639)', *ODNB* (Mar., 2019), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/29857> (9 Aug. 2022).

Clement Harby, a Levant merchant and a tin farmer, were also selected.²⁴² Important economic thinkers were also present, including Mun and Sir Ralph Maddison. By contrast, few of the outports were represented.²⁴³ This was a commission heavily dominated by London based merchants and courtiers with a clear interest in economic affairs.

The commissioners were charged with the task of continuing to consider the decay of trade in the realm. Notes in the papers of Caesar suggest that the Commission met every Tuesday during the legal term and on Tuesdays and Fridays in the vacation at Haberdashers' Hall in London.²⁴⁴ The creation of this body was hailed and celebrated; it was even suggested that copies of the text appointing it be sent 'into the seuerall Countyes' so that 'all men taking notice of them may come up' and be made aware of 'his Ma[jes]tys care of the case.'²⁴⁵ Knowledge of the Commission would thus spread amongst the 'common people' who could 'reioyce w[i]th thanks for his ma[jes]ties' love for his realm.²⁴⁶ This would allow 'all good patriots' and subjects to approach the Commission whenever they saw fit and to contribute to its work.²⁴⁷ Whilst this did not come to fruition, Slack correctly notes that this would have amounted to a broad appeal for public participation in the Commissions' work.²⁴⁸

The Commission still emerged as an important and new point of contact between subjects and central authorities. The proclamation of July had after all informed subjects of James's intention to appoint this body. Hitherto unacknowledged is the emergence of the Commission as a space for the sending of petitionary complaints. Much like the Commission for Glass, this was intended to be an important arm of the Council, relieving it of some pressure by hearing petitions. The commissioners were instructed that

²⁴² Friis, *Cockayne's Project*, p. 424.

²⁴³ Ashton, *City and Court*, p. 120.

²⁴⁴ BL, Add. MS 34,324, fo. 193r. For meeting notes, see fos. 195r-196v, 197r-198v, 209r-210v, 211r-212v, 213r-214v.

²⁴⁵ 'Sir Francis Nethersole to Carleton', 2 Nov. 1622, TNA, SP 81/27, fo. 164v.

²⁴⁶ BL, Add. MS 34,324, fo. 193r.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Slack, 'Political Economy', p. 64.

if any complaints shall be p^resented or offered vnto you, which concerne the interest or p[ar]ticuler greivaunce of p[ar]ticuler p[er]sons, we will & require you to indevo^r by all good means soe to mediate & p[er]swade w[i]th the p[ar]tys, as that yee may vett a final ende thervnto, if yee can.²⁴⁹

It was clearly expected that some of these complaints would take the form of anti-monopoly petitions. The instructions referred directly to the ‘suspicio[n]...raised vppo[n] the societyes & company of y^e Marchaunts adventurers & oth^{er} march[an]ts’ in recent years, calling on the commissioners to continue to investigate similar grievances.²⁵⁰ To assist them in this they were given full power and authority to view all records including company ordinance books.²⁵¹ If any company had orders which were found to be ‘unfitt to be continued, as tending to the generall hurt of others’, they were to be revoked and all future ordinances of these mercantile companies were to receive the prior approval of the King or Council.²⁵²

Crucially this power of the commissioners was later extended, allowing them additional authority to review the ordinances of ‘Companyes of Handycraftes men.’²⁵³ This extended its powers of review to the realm’s domestic corporations. Domestic livery company ordinances were already required to be approved by law officers according to a statute passed in 1503.²⁵⁴ In 1622 we see the Commission for Trade given authority to review and examine ordinances and charters which had already been passed, as well as those of mercantile companies for which previous statutes had not covered, thus ensuring that no corporation could enforce any monopolistic orders.

The Commission was also charged with the task of considering calls for the introduction of free trade. This was presented as a direct consequence of recent complaints made that trade was ‘imprisoned, being for the most p[a]rt confined to companys & societys of march[an]ts & all others excluded which are not members of thes companys.’²⁵⁵ The anti-Adventurer petitions presented to

²⁴⁹ TNA, SP 14/133, fo. 50r.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., fo. 45r.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ TNA, SP 14/133, fo. 68r.

²⁵⁴ This was the Ordinances of Corporations Act, 19 Henry VII c.7.

²⁵⁵ TNA, SP 14/133, fo. 45r.

both Council and the temporary Commission had clearly persuaded James of the need to continue investigating the monopolisation of trade by numerous companies. This was similar to the government's willingness to experiment with opening the cloth trade in 1587 upon complaints also made by clothiers and wool-growers.²⁵⁶ James too was not opposed to considering loosening trade restrictions; if it were necessary to 'giue way to a more free trade', the commissioners were to advise on how this was to be done.²⁵⁷ But the general desire for corporatism was reflected in the instructions that any remedy so proposed still ensure that both 'government & order in trade may be p^reserued & confusion avoyded.'²⁵⁸ The creation of this permanent Commission ultimately attests to the receptiveness of king and council to the worries and concerns surrounding both the Adventurers and corporate control, expressed by subjects to the temporary Commission for Trade. It also marked a significant epoch in the history of Jacobean petitioning, creating a new body designed to channel the economic grievances and complaints of the realm's subjects.

The active work of the permanent Commission for Trade in the years following its appointment has often been underestimated, and at times, fully overlooked. Evidence suggests that the body was especially important in two key areas: offering the Crown economic advice and in the hearing of petitions.

The Commission continued to investigate the cloth trade, communicating not only with the wider council, but also consulting with subjects to establish new rules and regulations better to govern the growing New Drapery trade. By June 1623 it thus made a report to the Council of new regulations which had been devised after consultation with the aldermen and mayor of Norwich, a

²⁵⁶ Gould, 'Crisis', p. 221.

²⁵⁷ TNA, SP 14/133, fos. 45r-46r.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

major centre for New Draperies.²⁵⁹ The Commission also investigated issues including the import of wool supplies from Ireland, the establishment of corn magazines, and the creation of clothing corporations in each county.²⁶⁰ At times, it was approached by JPs who were clearly aware of its jurisdiction and authority to deal with matters of trade. In October 1623, a certificate was sent by JPs in Suffolk and Essex complaining of new taxes imposed by the mayor of Rochester for the bringing in of fullers earth, a necessary commodity in the cloth making process.²⁶¹

James himself acknowledged the importance of the Commission. On 23 January 1625, the King wrote to the commissioners to praise them for recent improvements in trade.²⁶² He was sorry to hear that they had been lax in meeting in recent months, expressing concerns that this had caused problems in trade to re-appear. He thus encouraged commissioners to continue to meet weekly, stressing that it was 'necesarrie to keepe that Comission sett a foote, seeing nothing can concerne the Wellfare of o[u]r Revenue in point of o[u]r Customes now then the due execucion therof.'²⁶³ The Commission for Trade had indeed become an important arm of the state, continuing in its specified task of investigating problems in the realm's trade.

The Commission also emerged as an important avenue for the presentation of economic petitions. Notes in Caesar's papers document the sending of a petition from one Richard Cutter in Kent complaining of the continued illegal export of fullers earth and wood ashes.²⁶⁴ A surviving collective petition was also sent to the commissioners from the 'makers & weavers of Worstedds,

²⁵⁹ TNA, PC 2/32, fos. 46v-47r. For their consideration of the New Draperies issue, see BL, Add. MS 34,324, fos. 211r-212v.

²⁶⁰ *APC*, 38, pp. 34, 53-4, 115, 366, 389; BL, Add. MS 34,324, fos. 201r-202v. For continued attempts to implement plans for new corporations in February 1625, see 'Commissioners for Trade to Sec. Conway', 25 Feb. 1625, SP 14/184, fos. 72r-73v; 'Sec. Conway to the Commissioners for Trade', 4 Mar. 1625, TNA, SP 14/185, fo. 20r. The Commission even called for the projector Walter Morrell to be paid £40 a year for services performed for the Commission, see 'Commissioners for Trade to Sec. Conway', 27 Feb. 1625, TNA, SP 14/184, fo. 79r.

²⁶¹ *APC*, 39, p. 105. Another certificate was sent in 1624, see 'Justices of Suffolk and Essex to the Commissioners for Trade', 17 Apr. 1624, TNA, SP 14/162, fo. 118.

²⁶² BL, Add. MS 12,496, fo. 113r.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ BL, Add. MS 34,324, fos. 199r-200v.

Bayes, Sayes, Stuffes, & Fustians' from Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.²⁶⁵ Its collective authorship once again attests to the capacity for subjects to organise cross-county petitioning campaigns. Within their petition, the makers of New Draperies primarily called for the commissioners' aid in ensuring that all who practiced their art served seven-year apprenticeships and that all regulations pertaining to the wider cloth trade be applied and enforced. To aid them in this task, they requested the appointment of local officials to check the apprenticeship status of all workers. Their petition also provides insight into the process through which they had approached authority. They had petitioned parliament with their complaints, and on 8 March 1622 petitioned the Council with similar requests, which were referred to Justices in all three counties to review.²⁶⁶ Their petition of 1623 claimed that the Council had since 'referred the establishing, & finishing of the said busines to this ho[nora]ble assembly, being Comission[er]s for Trade.'²⁶⁷ Even if supplications were not always actively addressed by subjects to the Commission, the Council were clearly using it as a body to help them manage and respond to economic grievances.

Evidence also suggests that the Commission was used by corporations to further their own agendas. As they continued to consult expert opinion to investigate specific problems in trade, the commissioners appealed to the Staplers as part of their continued investigation concerning the export of wool. A surviving list of 'answers' made by the Company to questions propounded to them by the Commissioners on 13 December 1622 survives in Caesar's papers.²⁶⁸ The commissioners had sought their opinion as to why the prices of English wool were so low and why it had been recently exported in such great quantities. The Staplers' response once again demonstrated their ability to use any occasion possible to attack the Adventurers. They cleverly linked the issues of wool and cloth exports to suggest that the free export of cloth was the best

²⁶⁵ 'Petition and certificate of the makers and weavers of worsted, baize, says....in cos. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, to the Commissioners for trade', Mar. 1623, TNA, SP 14/140, fo. 133r.

²⁶⁶ APC, 38, p. 156; 'Justices of Essex to the Council', 13 May 1622, TNA, SP 14/130, fo. 83r; 'Justices of Essex to the Council', 10 Jan. 1623, TNA, SP 14/137, fo. 32.

²⁶⁷ TNA, SP 14/140, fo. 133r.

²⁶⁸ BL, Add. MS 34,324, fos. 203r-208v.

means to rectify problems in the wool industry. The enlargement of the cloth export trade was essential to make 'trade...run as swifte as a streame in the Channell.'²⁶⁹ Using bodily metaphors, they suggested that the Adventurers had 'kept all this trade soe long in few handes, till they haue made the Co[m]en wealth sicke...'²⁷⁰ They proceeded to call on the commissioners to allow the free export of cloth to 'all Companies of Marchants in England, and not to confyne it to any one Company.'²⁷¹ They ended by linking these issues to the wool trade; more merchants would cause more clothiers to resume cloth-making, which in turn would lead to a greater domestic demand for wools, preventing its illegal exportation abroad.²⁷² Much like in May 1622, the Staplers once again embraced the opportunity to offer expert advice to press their own agenda, framing their attack on the Adventurers around the continuing problem of wool exports. They even achieved some success; by 17 December Caesar recorded that the Adventurers had agreed to accept more members provided all subjects paid the relevant fines.²⁷³

Even London's domestic livery companies were aware of the opportunities created by this new commission. On 7 March 1623 members of the Grocers' Company approached their court of assistants requesting permission to send a 'petic[i]on to the Lords Commissione's appoynted by his Ma[jes]ties p[ro]clamac[i]on for the releife of Greevanc[e]s.'²⁷⁴ Patrick Wallis has argued that this petition was intended to be sent to the Commons' commission for grievances in the parliament of 1624.²⁷⁵ However, it dates to 1623 and it is more likely that the Grocers were hoping to send their complaint to Buckingham and other councillors; a proclamation published on 14 February 1623

²⁶⁹ Ibid., fo. 204r.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., fo. 204v.

²⁷¹ Ibid., fo. 205v.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ BL, Add, MS 34,324, fo. 209r.

²⁷⁴ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, p. 239.

²⁷⁵ Wallis, 'Medicines for London', pp. 31-3. Wallis identifies this petitioning effort with protest later launched by the Company in the parliament of 1624, yet the references to the King's appointment of a commission within the petition and its earlier date of 1623 suggests this was directed to the Commission for Trade. For their petitions against the Apothecaries which were sent to the 1624 parliament, see GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, pp. 270-1, 273-4.

announced the appointment of these figures for the hearing of petitioning complaints.²⁷⁶ The petition the Grocers sent was instead addressed to ‘his Ma[jes]ties Commissioners for Trades.’²⁷⁷ The wider Company were clearly aware of the appointment of the permanent Commission, seeing this body as a better avenue through which to channel these complaints. The source of the Grocers’ vexation was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the charter of the Apothecaries’ Company. Their decision to petition the Commission for Trade against this body was significant, suggesting not only that knowledge of the Commission and its openness to the hearing of complaints was widespread in the city, particularly amongst company leaders, but that they in turn perceived this as a body which might prove receptive to complaints made against a rival corporation.

By 8 April company lawyers had drafted a petition on behalf of their members to send to the lord mayor and aldermen, requesting their support before approaching the commissioners.²⁷⁸ The Grocers here stated that they perceived the Commission as the most appropriate place to direct their suit, created as it was ‘to here complaints touchinge Trades & Commerce.’²⁷⁹ By June 1623, the lord mayor and aldermen sent a letter to the Commission for Trade, informing them of the Grocers’ desire to petition the body, their grievances being a matter well within ‘ye Compasse of that ho[nora]ble Comission for trade.’²⁸⁰ The Commission proved receptive; by 7 July they ordered the Grocers to deliver them their full petition within the space of 14 days.²⁸¹ Whilst the final outcome of their investigations is sadly not documented, the commissioners did respond to the petition they received, calling the Grocers to send representatives to appear before them in October 1623 to discuss the matter.²⁸²

The Grocers’ petition to the Commission also provides further insights into the mechanics of company petitioning. Much like the case of starch, the initiative to launch this suit came from

²⁷⁶ Larkin and Hughes, I, pp. 568-70.

²⁷⁷ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, p. 243.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ LMA, COL/RMD/PA/01/006, fo. 15r; LMA, COL/CA/01/01/041, fo. 184r.

²⁸¹ GL, CLC/L/GH/B/001/MS11588/003, p. 250.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 263.

retailing grocers who sought the permission of the wider company before taking their complaints further. This support was important and beneficial; company leaders agreed to pay all charges for the suit from the Grocers' coffers.²⁸³ Yet this did not mean that these subjects were left with no role in the resulting supplicating activity. The wardens were ordered to call before them 'twoe sufficient p[er]sons of ev[er]ye of the sayd sev[er]all trades' affected by the Apothecaries' limits on the selling of wares, who were to 'advise & sett downe in wrightinge their p[ar]ticuler grievances.'²⁸⁴ Not only had the suit been initiated by disaffected members, but they were to play an active role in the drafting of the final petition produced. The Grocers therefore directed yet another complaint against the Apothecaries to this new body of authority. The Commission for Trade had clearly gained a reputation in the city as a space capable of dealing with inter-company disputes, likely due to its ability to investigate the ordinances of corporate bodies.

Whilst the Commission may not have altered or adapted the charter or by-laws of the Apothecaries, it did act to review the powers and authority of one corporation: the Adventurers' Company. In the parliament of 1624, the Adventurers faced a fresh onslaught of attacks as MPs continued to debate the causes of trade depression. Its monopolistic powers were lamented by contemporaries. Sir Edwin Sandys compared the Adventurers to the state of religion in the realm, 'not to be quite taken away but to be cleansed of the abuses that had crept in and to be reduced to his former purity.'²⁸⁵ As noted in chapter three, many other monopolies and patents were attacked in this parliament, culminating in the successful passing of the Statute of Monopolies. The Commons also proved willing to remove aspects of government regulation found to be detrimental to trade, including reducing the legal rate of interest and repealing tillage statutes.²⁸⁶ Whilst order and regulation were still important to economic policy, the Commons were willing to loosen some restrictions when necessary.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 249.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

²⁸⁵ '30 Apr. 1624', in *PP 1624*.

²⁸⁶ Slack, 'Political Economy', pp. 66-70.

Pressure against the Adventurers in this session came from numerous bodies. The Staplers once again reared their heads, taking advantage of the sitting of another parliament to press for permission to join the cloth export trade.²⁸⁷ Petitions were sent by clothiers and merchants, denouncing the Company's failure to purchase cloths and its small, monopolised nature.²⁸⁸ The Commission for Trade also played an important role in this attack, culminating in the Commons' recommendation of numerous measures to lessen the Company's monopoly. In a debate held on 4 March, Sandys celebrated the active work of 'his Majesty's commissioners' in recent months, who were directly invited to offer their opinion on the crisis to the House via the commissioner and MP Sir John Suckling.²⁸⁹ The House proceeded to focus on the same issues as considered by the commissioners in their meetings and reports, including the Company's impositions, small size, and enhanced powers. These debates led to decisive action. The Commons declared that, from henceforth, the Adventurers' monopoly was to be restricted to the export of white, undressed cloths only. All merchants were to be allowed to trade freely in dressed and dyed cloths to the Companies' mart towns, and the impositions of the Company were declared a grievance.²⁹⁰ By 11 May, knights in Gloucestershire even went so far as petitioning for the export of white cloths to be made open to all, a move which would have rendered the charter of the Company obsolete.²⁹¹

The House included their recommendations in a petition of grievance sent to James. Evidence suggests that it was the commissioners who were vital for pushing the King to accept these recommendations. A report written by Heath in May made clear that the 'Commissioners for trade' had advised James on how to respond to the petition, leading to his acceptance that the Adventurers' monopoly should be restricted.²⁹² By 3 July, the Commission delivered a final report

²⁸⁷ '23 Feb. 1624', in *PP 1624*; '2 Mar. 1624', in *PP 1624*.

²⁸⁸ '30 Apr. 1624', '19 Apr. 1624', '5th May 1624' in *PP 1624*; 'Brief of the grievances complained of by the Barons of the Cinque Ports', 9 Mar. 1624, TNA, SP 14/160, fos. 83r-84v.

²⁸⁹ '4 Mar. 1624', in *PP 1624*.

²⁹⁰ See '30 Apr', '10 May', '19 May' in *PP 1624*.

²⁹¹ '11 May', in *PP 1624*.

²⁹² 'Report by Sol. Gen. Heath of the King's answer', 29 May 1624, TNA, SP 14/165, fo. 126r.

on these points.²⁹³ It made clear that James had given direction to the commissioners to meet with the Adventurers, Staplers, and other merchants to reach a final agreement on these issues.²⁹⁴ In order to open 'the restraint of trade', it had been decided that the Adventurers would receive all 'meere merchants' into their fold, including the Staplers, for entrance fines to be set by the Council.²⁹⁵ The impositions they had placed on cloth were to be reduced by a third, placed on white cloths only, and imposed for a maximum of a further three years. The outports were also given liberty to trade in dyed and dressed cloths to the Adventurers' mart towns 'whether and when they will', and the New Drapery trade was made free to all, a move first proposed by the Council in the spring of 1622.²⁹⁶ The significance of these decisions was not lost on contemporaries; Heath noted that this left the Company with the export of white, undressed cloths only. Commenting on these events, Sir Francis Nethersole reported that the 'last deadly strike' had been delivered to the Company in the Commons.²⁹⁷ This 'strike' had been delivered not only by anti-monopoly agitation in the House, but by the continued work of the Commission for Trade. Whilst Leng has identified such factors as the rise of New Draperies, internal divisions, and parliamentary opinion as contributing to the decline of the Company's privileges, it is clear that a wider public opinion, receiving expression via the forum of petitions, was a crucial factor in this, as was the continuing work of the Commission for Trade.²⁹⁸

Many of the commissioners themselves stood to benefit from these changes. As merchants engaged in overseas trade and the farming of the customs, the collapse of the Adventurers' monopoly allowed them a means to enter the cloth export trade if they so wished. Similarly, a decline in the Adventurers' influence paved the way for the East India-Levant merchants to rise in dominance within city government.²⁹⁹ Many of the commissioners were active members of the East

²⁹³ *APC*, 38, pp. 268-9.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 268.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ 'Sir Fras. Nethersole to Carleton', 24 May 1624, TNA, SP 14/165, fo. 64v.

²⁹⁸ Leng, 'Interlopers', p. 840.

²⁹⁹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, pp. 79-82.

India Company, including Wolstenholme, Digges, and Mun. The anti-Adventurer rhetoric so prevalent within supplications and in parliament ultimately provided these commissioners with an opportunity, riding on this wave of public opinion to reduce the Adventurers' monopoly.

The Adventurers had fallen from their pedestal and suffered at the hands of anti-company sentiment and attacks expressed both in parliament and via petitionary complaints presented by clothiers and rival companies. It would take the arrival of a new monarch, who relied heavily on companies and monopolies, for the Adventurers to be restored to their former privileges.³⁰⁰

The economic depression which affected the English realm in the early 1620s had consequences and impacts far beyond its triggering of widespread unemployment, coinage shortages, and distress in clothing districts. It had important implications for the petitioning activity of the realm's subjects. In this context, clothiers articulated anti-company sentiments in their petitions, voicing demands for the establishment of a freer trade whilst issuing specific attacks against the monopolising powers of the Merchant Adventurers' Company. Authorities proved remarkably receptive to the complaints received, establishing a temporary and permanent Commission for Trade expressly charged with gathering advice on the causes of depression, and with considering the potential benefits of a free trade in the realm. Both bodies were also clearly intended to act as an important space for the channelling of economic discontent. In turn they were actively used by subjects who took advantage of the opportunities they created to present their petitions and reports pertaining to the economic crisis.

Supplications sent to the temporary Commission engaged with the important issues of corporate regulation and monopoly, using important discourses and sentiments prevalent within

³⁰⁰ Leng, *Fellowship and Freedom*, p. 227.

the political and economic sphere to further their own interests. In doing so, we are provided with yet another example of the ability of subjects to utilise sophisticated discursive mechanisms, heavily shaped by contextual considerations and by pre-existent debates within parliament. These complaints had important institutional effects, contributing to the creation of a more permanent body invested with novel powers to review the charters and ordinances of overseas and domestic trading corporations. This body was intended better to streamline the process through which economic petitions were heard by authority going forward, including anti-monopoly petitioning complaints. It thus marked an important epoch in the history of early Stuart petitioning practice.

The petitions to this Commission also demonstrate the capacity for cross-county collaboration and action. Disgruntled clothiers issued collective complaints to lament the distress felt throughout the realm. Perhaps organising themselves together at Blackwell Hall or when attending the Commission, their collective suits demonstrate the ability for subjects to leave the confines of their own localities as they articulated their concerns with the national impacts of this widespread depression.

The net result of all these changes was profound; anti-Adventurer rhetoric and calls for a freer trade ultimately succeeded in lessening the privileges of the Adventurers' Company. By 1632 the total number of merchants in the Company had tripled since 1622; its monopoly had clearly been compromised.³⁰¹ Supple has argued that the depression provided the opportunity for various interests to come together, united in their disdain towards London's companies, leading to the weakening of the mighty Adventurers.³⁰² However, he regards parliament as the chief arena through which these interests collaborated, mirroring a historiography which has focused especially on how this issue was addressed in the parliament of 1624. Leng has by contrast focused on the importance of the Privy Council in the lessening of the Adventurers' authority, attributing this to a questioning of the need for company regulation in the cloth trade triggered by the

³⁰¹ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 60.

³⁰² Supple, *Commercial Crisis*, p. 71.

Cockayne crisis.³⁰³ Hitherto unnoticed is the role petitions and public opinion played in this narrative. The torrent of complaints directed against the Company in 1622 must be seen as a contributing factor for the Council and King's questioning of the ordinances and policies of the Adventurers, causing them to charge the permanent Commission for Trade with the task of investigating the Company. Subjects' concerns with the dominance of this Company prompted an active response by the Council and one which decisively impacted the future of company regulation of the cloth trade. In turn, the permanent Commission for Trade played an active role in 1624, advising both the King and Commons of the need to restrict the Adventurers' privileges.

This also carries implications for our understanding of city politics in this pivotal period. Whilst Brenner has argued that the Crown remained allied with companies by the end of James's reign, the King was willing to heed the advice of the Commission for Trade and reduce the Adventurers' monopoly.³⁰⁴ Similarly, these events cannot be seen as resulting merely from pressures applied by an alliance between MPs, Prince Charles, and Buckingham.³⁰⁵ In reality the combined influence of parliamentary pressure, public opinion, and the actions of the Commission for Trade all contributed to this blow to the Adventurers' Company.

The narrative of these events also sheds light on the wider politics of the early 1620s, stressing the centrality of economic issues in the politics of the period. Considerations and debates surrounding economic crisis dominated such spaces as parliament, council, and court, and gave rise to the creation of two important commissions which played an active role in policy. Subjects were clearly politicised by economic issues, turning to petitions to lament their distress, or as in the case of the Drapers and Staplers, using concerns with free trade and monopoly as a careful cloak for their own interests. Despite the Council's frequent receiving of reports of gatherings of crowds in clothing districts, James and the Council did not attempt to shut down discussion of economic matters. An important shift had clearly taken place. Writing to Justices in Wiltshire at the beginning

³⁰³ Leng, *Fellowship and Freedom*, p. 226.

³⁰⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, ch. 5.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

of the depression in 1616, the Council had called for any examinations of the distress in the cloth industry to be carried out quietly, to be 'not too publique to make a noyse amongst the people.'³⁰⁶ Similarly in their letters sent to clothing counties in February 1622 the Council had called on JPs to appoint two 'discreet' men from their shires to report on these matters, fearful that news of this action would reach a larger public and cause clamours. By April and September, it actively sought the opinions of not only merchants, but also clothiers, and even toyed with the idea of publicising news of the permanent Commission to the realm's subjects. The Council and Crown encouraged and indeed welcomed the participation of subjects in this sphere. This was not simply a move triggered by their fear of the outbreak of disorder in the clothing counties.³⁰⁷ As Slack has argued, the Crown had accepted that it could not hope to manage the economy without the intervention of a wider body of opinion.³⁰⁸ This stood as a marked contrast to James's attitude to the participation of subjects in issues of foreign and religious policy in the same period. This allowed space for subjects to use economic issues to bridge the gap between themselves and authority. Via petitions, they were able to enter this sphere of negotiation and advice giving. The 'public sphere' was just as engaged with economic issues as it was with religion or foreign policy.

Finally, the capacity for clothiers and corporate members to engage with important issues such as monopoly, free trade, and causes of the crisis helps to reconceptualise whom exactly constituted economic thinkers in the period. Stern and Wennerlind have stressed the need to broaden our understanding of this beyond the texts of economic theorists alone.³⁰⁹ The petitions sent to authority in these years demonstrate the need to consider these types of subjects as important contributors to the emerging world of economic thought, whilst also highlighting the necessity for historians to look beyond pamphlets and print to trace these ideas.³¹⁰ Manuscript

³⁰⁶ *APC*, 35, p. 22.

³⁰⁷ Gould argues that this was an important factor for the experiment in free trade in 1586, see Gould, 'Crisis', p. 221.

³⁰⁸ Slack, 'Political Economy', p. 65.

³⁰⁹ Stern and Wennerlind, 'Introduction', p. 7.

³¹⁰ Tazzara, 'Managing Free Trade', p. 527.

sources, including reports and petitions, provide a crucial insight into perceptions of company regulation, monopoly, and crisis, whilst offering us important insight into the process, prevalence, and significance of anti-monopoly petitioning in the Jacobean age.

Conclusion

In truth the world doth euer grone vnder the burthen of these perpetuall patents, w[hi]^{ch} are become so frequent, that whereas at the k[ing]s comming in there were complaints of some eight or nine monopolies then in beeing, they are now said to be multiplied to so many soures.¹

In July 1620 the prolific news gatherer Sir John Chamberlain informed his companion Sir Dudley Carleton of the various affairs occurring in the city of London. Within his letter, Chamberlain paid particular attention to the ‘perpetuall patents’ which had grown in number, reflecting a widespread disappointment that James’s initial projection of himself as a reformer of odious monopolies had been nothing but an empty promise. Such was the effect of his policy that the body politic had become covered in wounds and ‘soures’: these monopolies were nothing but a disease on the commonwealth.

From 1590-1625 the granting of monopolies was a crucial issue within court, parliament, and the public sphere more broadly, demonstrating the strong intersection between economic issues and popular politics at the turn of the seventeenth century. As subjects grappled with the effects of this tool of prerogative finance on their trades and livelihoods, they turned to petitioning to express their discontent to such authorities as the Court of Aldermen, parliament, council, and even the Crown. Through London’s livery companies and indeed sometimes independently of them, disgruntled artisans, merchants, and traders organised petitioning campaigns as they attempted to negotiate with authority, putting pressure on king and council to revoke or reform odious grants. The four case studies chosen in this thesis, for leather, starch, glass, and cloth offer a window through which to observe this anti-monopoly petitioning activity in practice.

The petitions produced within these campaigns attest to the vibrancy and extent of late Elizabethan and Jacobean manuscript petitioning culture, demonstrating the importance of studying this period’s petitioning activity on its own terms. Whilst much work has illuminated the

¹ ‘Chamberlain to Carleton’, 8 July 1620, TNA, SP 14/116, fo. 20v.

prevalence and centrality of the practice in the Civil War years and following, petitioning activity in the years 1590-1625 has not received a comparably extensive analysis. Yet this period was crucial in the history of early modern petitioning; manuscript petitions emerged as key device through which subjects attempted to negotiate with authority. The supplications produced did not rely on formulaic styles or utterances but were rhetorically rich, complex, and often unique as subjects deployed various discursive mechanisms. No two anti-monopoly petitions were the same in style or form. They attest to the ability of subjects to shape their petitioning appeals according to the authority addressed and to respond with sophistication to key contextual events and concerns occurring at the time of writing. Issues such as fear of unemployment and distress in the 1590s, the Jacobean accession, and the depression of the 1620s were addressed in the appeals of subjects as they attempted to ensure the success of their suits. Petitioners also responded to prevailing discourses in political culture more broadly, including concerns with factionalism, self-interest, and duplicity. Tropes and utterances so common to 'politic reasoning' were important frameworks not only for court or parliamentary histories, but in economic petitions presented by subjects.² The ability for petitioners to engage with anti-monopoly rhetoric as expressed in such spaces as parliament and with ideas in the economic sphere also reveals that this petitioning activity did not occur in a vacuum; it was constantly shaped and influenced by the larger political, religious, and economic events affecting the realm.

The reaction of the Crown to this participation of its subjects was at times complex. In theory, petitioning was welcomed as a suitable form of participation, a sanctioned channel through which subjects of all degrees could appeal to their social superiors. New institutions were created to channel complaints, primarily in response to the sheer number of anti-monopoly petitions burdening the Crown and Council. Yet in practice, there were limits on what was deemed as acceptable petitioning behaviour. The monarch welcomed this activity, but the means of

² Millstone, 'Politic History', p. 188.

presentation remained a source of concern. Supplications were always to be presented without clamour, without large numbers, and through acceptable channels. Crown and Council remained concerned with the potential threat posed by the many-headed monster, even though anti-monopoly petitioning was peaceful and only occasionally burdensome when groups like the Dyers incessantly approached authority. Subjects however proved adept at playing on the regime's anxieties when challenging the petitioning activity of their opponents within dialogic petitioning campaigns, using the Crown's own stance on this form of participation as a means of bolstering their appeals.

London's livery companies emerged as particularly strong petitioners against monopolies which infringed on the rights of their members to practice their established trades and industries. By focusing on campaigns launched by, and at times against, livery and mercantile companies, this thesis has also cast light on the enduring political importance and culture of London's corporations. Companies continued the lobbying and political interventions used so adeptly in the sixteenth century, spearheading and supporting petitioning campaigns against monopolies. In turn, the company became an important political space and an active site for the participation of the city's freemen (and at times their wives), providing the resources and authority to support their petitioning campaigns. Lawyers and clerks were important figures drafting and offering advice for supplications, whilst the company chest proved an important resource financing particularly long and expensive campaigns. In many instances, the initiative to petition came from company members themselves; one cannot assume that it was company leaders alone who organised these campaigns. The associations and relationships made at the level of the corporation, and even between companies, were important for facilitating collective petitioning behaviour. Physical spaces such as company halls provided important locations where this petitioning activity could occur. This thesis ultimately demonstrates the enduring centrality of corporatism and the interaction of these bodies with both the city and the Crown, challenging perceptions that the seventeenth century was a period of decline for London's livery companies. Whilst many may have

struggled to stop the involvement of non-freemen and strangers in their trade or to gain new regulatory powers, these bodies continued to be important and active political institutions. More broadly, this points to the need for further investigations into domestic corporate cultures in the early seventeenth century, drawing on the rich and often untapped manuscript archives of these same bodies, better to understand the complex interactions between company, state, and subjects occurring during this important age of monopoly and incorporation.

This thesis has also demonstrated the vitality of petitioning activity outside of formal company structures. Subjects like the glassmakers proved capable of organising independent and collective petitioning campaigns outside of the official structures of corporation, whilst subjects in different corporate bodies were able to launch campaigns across corporate institutions. Clothiers from across counties were also able to collaborate to protest economic issues. Previous historiographical debates on the county community and localism have frequently been framed around the gentry.³ An awareness of the importance of cross-county marriages, kinship networks, and links with London has challenged the notion that the gentry were particularly insular, concerned only with the affairs of their own shires.⁴ The petitioning activity of clothiers shown in this thesis clearly demonstrates that subjects below the level of the gentry could also co-operate across counties. They were also able to frame their concerns around larger issues of monopoly, corporate governance, and depression, whilst engaging with parliamentary debates on these very same issues. The active participation of these subjects serves to illustrate the social depth of collective action at the turn of the seventeenth century.

The clothiers' attacks on the Merchant Adventurers also enhance our understandings of the broader relationship between London and the localities, challenging any suggestions that subjects in the localities were ill-informed of national events and issues. Whilst the work of Robert Ashton has already illustrated the tensions between outport merchants and the city, so obviously

³ C. Holmes, 'The County Community in Stuart Historiography', *Journal of British Studies*, 19:2 (1980), pp. 54-73. For example, see A. M. Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London, 1969).

⁴ Holmes, 'The County Community'.

expressed in the parliament of 1604, petitions sent to the Council and to the temporary Commission for Trade in 1622 serve to highlight the interactions between London and clothing counties. The dominance of the mighty Adventurers was a source of vexation for counties across the realm, and the real effects of their monopoly on subjects emboldened members of the cloth industry to petition against them. Monopoly concerns were not isolated to the city alone, and news of developments such as the Cockayne project, the stagnation of cloths at Blackwell Hall, and parliamentary debates spread to the counties, likely through the clothiers themselves. London based institutions such as the permanent Commission for Trade also moved to invite the opinions of subjects throughout the realm. Communication and negotiation categorised the relations between counties and the city as much as tensions over the monopolistic control of the Adventurers' Company.

This thesis has also highlighted the complexities of London's various institutions in this period. Conflicts and competition between livery and trading companies, and even within these bodies, was an important feature of city politics. The growth of syndicates and patentees only intensified these tensions, as alliances were made and broken between artisans and courtiers. Even within trades such as the glass industry, conflicting groups with different aims emerged as powerful forces capable of allying with courtiers to serve their own agendas. The city was home to a complex political and economic environment; anti-monopoly disputes throw this presence of overlapping institutions into plain sight.

Finally, late Elizabethan and Jacobean anti-monopoly petitioning activity captures the strong intersection between the economic world and popular politics in this period. This prerogative fiscal policy animated subjects, whilst emerging as a repeated topic of concern in parliament and court. Petitions emerged as the chief means through which subjects resisted the loss of their trades and rights occasioned by this widespread economic policy. In shedding light on this important intersection this thesis has, perhaps most importantly, demonstrated the need to re-shape our understandings of the politics of the public sphere at the turn of the seventeenth

century. The public sphere was characterised by issues other than religion and foreign policy; economic issues were central for politicising subjects and they dominated public discussion from the 1590s well into the 1620s. Concerns with monopoly led subjects actively to engage with broader economic questions such as corporate regulation, the ordering of trade, and even the role of specie and money in the realm. Debates surrounding the meaning of monopoly and concerns with issues such as the regulation of trade also led subjects to question the possible benefits of the establishment of a 'free trade' in the realm.

Historians clearly need to look beyond printed texts or the works of prominent economic theorists to find evidence of this process; manuscript petitions became important sources through which subjects battled and engaged with these issues whilst appealing to authority in favour of their own interests or causes. As it attempted to formulate policy, the Crown and Privy Council actively drew merchants and corporate bodies into politics, relying on their expert opinion. In doing so, they only further encouraged the active participation of these figures as they attempted to influence policy via lobbying and petitioning activity. By shining a light on the important intersection between the early modern economy and popular politics, this thesis has demonstrated the need for further work to demonstrate the sheer extent of this interaction throughout the early seventeenth century, placing economic issues at the heart of our understandings of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean regimes and of the wider politics of the public sphere.

Chamberlain's claim that the realm did 'groane' under the sheer weight of monopolies granted by 1620 was therefore no exaggeration. What is clear is that this groan was heard throughout the realm and by numerous levels of authority, voiced as it was through the important device of early modern petitions.

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