Chalus and Gauci (eds), *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People* (2019)

Purpose: ‘mark importance’ of PCP and ‘celebrate the life and scholarly legacy of its author’ [1]

Intro: assess place of PCP in career, impact and continued inspiration.

* Early career – high politics
* Reception of PCP
  + Welcomed (generally, not by Clark) – energised field. Emphasis on period as one of change – esp. located in dynamism generated by expanding middling sort. Part of histo moment when big arguments for change all published – Borsay, Colley, Brewer.
  + Langford reflected in 2002 – noted wider interest in various cultural phenomena, art set in context etc.
* Revisiting
  + Politics: focus on interactions between high and low blurring the line. How work of Westminster politics ‘connected to wider publics’ – Pettigrew on RAC, Gauci controversy surrounding building of Blackfriars Bridge. Crown and Parliament – fared as subjected to greater public scrutiny. Seaward on gallery, McCreery on satirical portrayals of William IV.
  + Society and Culture: middling sorts – propertied classes ensure equilibrium – prevent against upheaval. Urban governance, personal finances, socio-cultural identity.
  + England, Britain and the World – wider not feature heavily in PCP because in history of England series. Britain relationship to empire – challenges of integrating growing empire. Personalised world – family networks, personal strategies.
  + Final word – Jo Innes reassess companion volume – Public Life and the Properties Englishman.
  + Directions still to go: more on lesser-middling end; comparative and regional – over-preponderance of metropolitan studies. Intergenerational view – how those schooled in late eighteenth century went on to shape 19th [could also be said about those schooled in 17th century?]

3: increasing popularity of visiting the Commons to watch – politics as theatre

6: Lotteries – contradictions inherent

8: domesticity – historicising domesticity, speaks to progress of civilisation, while also considering how 18th century pioneered new forms of history under the guise of antiquarianism

9: Slavery and the plantations – contradictions – politeness and morality of slave owning

12: Longevity of politeness, plus female adolescence

PLAN

Book brief intro – contributors some of Paul Langford’s students, others not.

* ‘celebrate life and scholarly legacy’
* Impact of PCP been reflected on before – emphasis on middling sort, and culture – changing perception of eighteenth century not stability, aristocracy, but change and dynamic middling sort. Along with Borsay and Colley – other books still staples of reading lists.

Structure of book – some comments on each chapter

* After account of Langford’s career …
* PCP very wide-ranging in terms of topics etc. – still among the most useful introductions to the period. Chapters covered by volume also diverse.
* Three themes: Politics; Society and Culture; England, Britain and the World.
  + Focus of each detailed in intro
* 12 chapters
* Afterword by Joanna Innes – route-map to reading Public Life – Langford working on at the same time – much less influential and not discussed as much. Aim to encourage scholars to read into it again.

Themes

* Contradictions – perhaps unsurprising. (Lotteries, ownership of enslaved people
* Langford’s ideas: politeness, progress, forward looking – period of change. Chapters all pay homage to Langford, argue for continuing relevance of his conception of eighteenth-century English society. But also make contributions to their individual subfields (Becoming a gentlewoman - legacy of politeness as well as insights into female adolescence; domesticity and the progress of civilisation – eighteenth-century mentality a la Langford)
  + Not just about celebrating Langford’s influence – looking backwards. Also forwards: points in new directions – Britain and the World section esp.
  + Britain the world section
* Also flags up where work is still needed.
* Argument for greater attention to eighteenth century to nineteenth, though blind to the same being true for the seventeenth into the eighteenth?

‘all contributors address and seek to develop the central concerns of Paul’s work, remaining convinced of the importance of the eighteenth century as a critical pivot of change’ [15]