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**Hannah Greig and Amanda Vickery**

### **The Political Day in London, c. 1697-1834**

What did an eighteenth-century politician do all day? This may sound a mundane query, but the simplest questions are often the hardest to answer. The meaning and mechanisms of eighteenth-century high politics have long been debated. Was government personal, local and the possession of a narrow elite, or ideological, proto-modern and answerable to public opinion?<sup>1</sup> Was politics a masculine bastion, or accessible to propertied widows and heiresses, lubricated by social politics engineered by women?<sup>2</sup> Yet notwithstanding decades of scholarship, it is still not easy to discern precisely how and where a politician spent his time and how parliament and court ran on an ordinary day. What time did MPs and Lords clock into parliament? What did they do en route? How did Lords and ministers divide their time between court, allies, society and the House? To make these inquiries requires analysis of all the components of the political infrastructure of the eighteenth-century regime. This article uses the methodological and conceptual prism of a ‘political day’ to develop a new approach to the study of eighteenth-century political culture, using techniques developed by historians of time, space and gender to interrogate political life and to explore how court and parliament, Lords and Commons, noblemen and noblewomen, formal politics and social politics, complemented and countered each other.

Politics in the sense of matters related to the state (the ‘polis’) was a concept available to the elite via Aristotle and a classical education. However, in so far as the ruling ranks examined

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929), John Brewer, *Party, Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c.1754-1790* (Oxford, 2005) and Judith Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (London, 2003).

their role, 'politics' was not the first concept for which they reached. 'Politics' often connoted strife and unpleasant manoeuvring. 'Publick business' and 'publick life' were readier terms. Ministers of the crown considered themselves executors of the 'King's Business', while 'Man of business' was a common self-descriptor for MPs. This article uses 'the political' in its classical sense as relating to the execution of parliamentary and state business. The political ranks were those with seats in Lords and Commons, many of whom attended court and dominated the governance of both the nation and the counties. They were privileged to be sure, but not exceptional for their caste.

This article first maps the urban geography of the political day. Published lists of politicians' metropolitan addresses, printed regularly from at least the 1720s, make it possible to plot the distribution of their seasonal London addresses. This mapping reveals that their political campus was remarkably dense, compact and convenient - a convenience which was critical to its diurnal rhythms. Second, it offers an ethnography of daily routines, reconstructing the habitual movements and timetable of the metropolitan 'political day' from a wealth of fractured and incidental references. Recovering daily patterns presents methodological challenges, as this is not a history which can easily be retrieved from state papers. The formal schedules of the House of Parliament, for instance, offer a poor guide to time management in practice. The quotidian has to be pieced together from snippets in personal manuscripts, memorandum books, engagement diaries and ephemera. Manuscript references to time and place are typically brief, functional, and easily missed, while broader trends have to be extrapolated from fragments dispersed throughout an individual's lifetime of reportage. The methodology underpinning this research, recreating a mosaic from archival fragments, is familiar from women's history where public documentation is often scanty, but it is applied here to revisit the metropolitan political culture and experience of men as well as women. Finally the article draws out the implications a focus on time and space has for the conceptualisation of eighteenth-century politics.

Bringing the issues of time and space to bear on the daily business of the politically powerful throws a new light on an apparently old-fashioned topic. High politics are not at the forefront of historiographical debate, nor have they been for decades. Early last century, Lewis Namier's prosopography of the parliamentary classes concluded that most were driven by personal, family, or perhaps regional interests, rarely simple Whig and Tory allegiances, and

gave the impression that high politics was the possession of a few hundred men at the top.<sup>3</sup> Few would now argue that the broader political history of the long eighteenth century was only, or even primarily, concerned with the selfish manoeuvring of parliamentary cliques. The consensus follows John Brewer's claim that the political nation was broader than the parliamentary classes or even the electorate, and that political argument bound the political nation and the formal managers of power. A burgeoning press, the flowering of clubs, a culture of petitioning and riot all constituted a vibrant public opinion to which politicians had to defer.<sup>4</sup> The lobby, which depended on interpersonal networks, inside information and direct access to influential members of Parliament, was the most effective means of influencing legislation.<sup>5</sup> How far women were genuine political participants in the political process has been debated. Aristocratic women used to be dismissed by political historians as colourful, but insignificant, and neglected by women's historians as unappealingly over-privileged. As Elaine Chalus observes 'our understanding of women and politics has suffered from an understanding of politics that placed Parliament at the top of a hierarchy of political venues and tacitly equated real politics with 'high politics'. In order to be 'real' it was long taken for granted that actions and venues had to have some direct impact on high politics and policy decisions.'<sup>6</sup> Chalus and Judith Lewis inter alia have laboured to shift this historiographical presumption, by documenting the power that heiresses and widows wielded as heads of political interest in the constituencies, as brokers of patronage, as political hostesses, shapers of public opinion and critics of speeches. However this project has itself been criticized for reintroducing a discredited vision of political life, one that foregrounds patronage, networks and personal advantage at the expense of ideology, thereby putting new clothes on exhausted concepts, simply 'Namier in petticoats'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the old dichotomy between real politics and soft diplomacy lingers, along with a suspicion that women and heterosocial extra-parliamentary activity were irrelevant to most politicians. Was the pre-sessional ball or the post-debate dinner just a light distraction from the business of voting and arguing in the House itself?

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<sup>3</sup> Namier, *Structure of Politics*.

<sup>4</sup> Patrician politicians often had a restricted view of quite which public opinion was worth consideration. See Brewer, *Party*, 139-160, 236. Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy. The Tory Party, 1714-1760* (Cambridge, 1982), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Julian Hoppit (ed.), *Failed Legislation, 1660-1800: extracted from the Commons and Lords Journals* (London, 1997), Julian Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies: Parliament and Economic Life, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 78.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Mandler, 'Namier in Petticoats? Review of K. D. Reynolds *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, *Reviews in History*, February 1999 <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/63>

Perhaps hostesses had an exaggerated sense of their own importance? Clearly women could not serve as ministers, ambassadors, MPs, lawyers, or civil servants, while the idea of the female politician raised a shudder in many a male breast. Peter Mandler argues that from c. 1800 onwards a ‘masculinized culture of political virtue based upon a classical education, the male arts of the public meeting and public oratory, and the tight fraternities of the two houses of Parliament’ infected the governing families, severely curtailing male tolerance of female assertiveness.<sup>8</sup> When asked to reflect on the weight of evidence put forward by women’s historians suggestive of expansive female participation in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century political culture, Mandler has remarked on the derision politicians expressed in camera, believing ‘that the respectful tone’ they took in writing to some patronesses ‘may disguise a genuine contempt that men felt for these women’.<sup>9</sup> In this reading then, social politics were effervescent but empty.

Certainly, many statesmen had a cultic reverence for parliamentary debate and a triumphant view of their own destiny. On entering the Commons in January 1794 as MP for Wendover George Canning was elated. ‘I felt myself walking about the floor which I had so often contemplated *in my youth* from the Gallery.’ The occasion of his maiden speech was ‘perhaps the most important day of my life.’ Canning’s delight in the culmination of his rhetorical ambition was physical in its intensity: ‘I know no pleasure (sensual pleasure I had almost said) equal to that which I had experienced.’ The pre-eminence of parliament, exclusive to men, was integral to his personal narrative. A ‘woman has no business at all with politicks’ he grumbled in June 1795, ‘or that if she thinks at all about them, it should be at least in a feminine manner’.<sup>10</sup> Though it is unwise to take such self-congratulation about the virility of political life at face value, the argument about women, men and ‘real politics’ has now reached an impasse. However rather than searching for evidence of men’s appreciation of women’s political participation, and for proof of women’s impact on policy, this article takes a step back and asks how *both* men and women spent their time.

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Mandler, ‘From Almack’s to Willis’s: Aristocratic Women and Politics, 1815-1867’, in Amanda Vickery, *Women, Power and Privilege: British Politics 1750 to the present* (Stanford, 2001), 157.

<sup>9</sup> In discussion with Lewis, *Sacred*, 222.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Jupp (ed.), *The Letters Journal of George Canning 1793 – 1795* (Camden 4<sup>th</sup> series, vol 41) (London, 1991), 58, 118, 283-84. The night after a long sitting at the House William Wilberforce found the debates dominated his dreams. Diary entry for 2 Feb. 1784, reprinted in Robert Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce *The Life of William Wilberforce Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1838), 46.

Mapping the movements of the governing class across London during a typical political day fuses the history of politics with a more recent interest in space, movement and time. Economic historians have long been fascinated by the distinctiveness of London,<sup>11</sup> while the built environment of the metropolis and the erection of the new West End have always engaged architectural historians.<sup>12</sup> More recently, feminist and historical geographers have stressed the role of the spatial as a constituent of power and a governor of behaviour.<sup>13</sup> Many are indebted to Michel de Certeau's distinction between space and place: a 'place' being defined as a physical location and a 'space' a field of action which is related to a 'place'.<sup>14</sup> These insights have inspired a spatial turn among cultural historians, though gender historians have long been preoccupied with the boundaries between public and private space.<sup>15</sup> Space, place and politics are linked by Katrina Navickas in her study of 'the closing down of public space' for popular protest 'and dispossession from place' in Northern England between 1789 and 1848, while Christina Parolin has demonstrated how radicals used London taverns from 1790 to 1845 to agitate for reform, claiming them as alternative parliaments.<sup>16</sup> Some social scientists consider the spatial turn too static and promote a 'mobility paradigm' as a new way to frame the social; tracking the movement of people, things and ideas across space and time.<sup>17</sup> The concept of time

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<sup>11</sup> E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', in P. Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (eds.), *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London, 1945), Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-century London: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, 2004), Elizabeth Mckeller, *The Birth of Modern London: The Development and Design of the City 1660-1720* (Manchester, 1999), Elizabeth Mckeller, *Landscapes of London: The City, the Country and the Suburbs, 1660-1840* (New Haven, 2003), D. Cruikshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (London, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> See for example Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies 1680-1780* (New York, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life Vol 1* (London, 1984; 2011), 117-118.

<sup>15</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), 383-414, Jennifer Melville, 'The Use and Organization of Domestic Space in Late Seventeenth-Century London' (PhD., Cambridge, 1999), Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore (eds), *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London, 2003), Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's Home is His Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House', *Past & Present*, Vol 199, Issue 1 (2008), 147-173, Hannah Stockton 'Flows for All Mankind': Everyday Life, the City and Empire on the London Thames, 1660-1830 (Ph.D., London, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London 1790 - c 1845* (Acton, 2010). See also Elaine Chalus, 'Space, place and environment', in *The Routledge History Handbook of Gender and the Urban Experience* (Routledge, 2017), 85-89 and Elaine Chalus, 'Gender, place and power: Controverted elections in late Georgian England', in James Daybell and Svante Norrhem (eds), *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800* (Oxford, 2016), 179-195.

<sup>17</sup> Mimi Shelley & John Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38 (2) (2006), 207-226, John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge, 2007)

itself, clock time, work-time and night-time, have their historians, though E. P. Thompson's claim that the eighteenth century saw the definitive rise of clock-time as a corollary of industrial time discipline has been disputed.<sup>18</sup> London was home to different temporal regimes. The light and darkness of the seasons, the tides on the Thames, the pealing of church bells, the strict hours of the exchange, the departure times of post-chaises to the provinces, and the deadlines of the royal mail bore differently on different ranks. In season, the political elite enjoyed and endured a distinctive, and to the uninitiated, alarmingly casual timetable. The palace of Westminster did not engross as much of a politician's day as rhetoric might lead one to expect. This article seeks to disrobe the performances of masculine authority, and to dismantle the false distinctions between women and men, the social and the political, the worthily historical and the everyday.

### **Section 1: The Political Campus: Mapping a political 'square mile'**

The architecture, geography, spaces and places of London determined the conduct of politics. London was the capital, the seat of government, the nation's leading port, its largest industrial centre and a metropolis of fashion, retail and culture. It was administratively complex, encompassing two cities (London and Westminster), one Borough (Southwark) and 46 villages.<sup>19</sup> The City of Westminster took on an unprecedented importance to the governing ranks after the Revolution of 1688-9 which established an annual parliament for the first time in British history. Logging the length of House of Commons sessions between 1610 and 1800, Paul Langford showed that the sittings before 1689 were very patchy, but thereafter parliament sat year after year.<sup>20</sup> This shift was of profound constitutional significance, but it also transformed the lifestyles of parliamentarians, making London residence for long periods essential, creating an

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<sup>18</sup> PJ Corfield, *Time and the Shape of History* (Yale, 2007), E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present*, No. 38 (Dec., 1967), 56-97, Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (London, 1996), Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1999); Peter Wagner, 'Representations of Time in Hogarth's Paintings and Engravings', in Bindman, Ogée and Wagner, *Hogarth* (Manchester, 2001), Hans-Joachim Voth, *Time and Work in England 1750-1830* (Oxford, 2000), Roger Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (New York, 2006), Paul Glennie & Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800* (Oxford, 2009), Anne Murphy, 'Clock-Watching: Work and Working Time at the Late Eighteenth-Century Bank of England', *Past & Present*, Vol 236, Issue 1 (2017), 99-132.

<sup>19</sup> John Noorthouck, *New History of London* (London, 1773), 521.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Langford, *Public life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1798* (Oxford, 1991), 141-42.

epicentre of concentrated executive power.<sup>21</sup> The early eighteenth-century expansion of the fashionable ‘West End’ of London is well charted (fig. 1).<sup>22</sup> Less remarked is the fact that the flowering of the ‘new town’ in London’s western quarter was a direct topographical response to the new political regime.

A watershed event for the political geography of London was the conflagration that consumed much of the mammoth Palace of Whitehall in 1698. Critically, no equivalent was rebuilt and as no suitable accommodation had survived the fire, the court was thereafter dispersed across different palaces (St James's, Kensington, Windsor and Hampton Court). In contrast, the chambers used by the Commons and Lords were spared the flames and so parliament and government lingered in Whitehall. This architectural fracture brought a physical divorce between crown and parliament that was arguably far more significant in terms of the daily operation of political business than constitutional changes wrought after 1689. Moreover, the chambers of parliament were small, cramped and not equal to their function. In consequence, political business was perforce enacted across ‘civilian’, often mixed sex space, across a hectic square mile. Another conflagration bookends this analysis, the fire of 1834 that finally destroyed the parliamentary chambers and led to the creation of the Victorian Palace of Westminster that stands by the Thames today. This article focuses on the distinct era of 1688 to 1834. The nature of the sources do not lend themselves to even application across this range, and the evidence is denser from around 1750, but what data is available for the earlier decades suggests that a particular pattern to the political day was established by the early 1700s and retained, albeit under increasing pressure, until the parliamentary reforms of the 1830s.

The concentration of parliamentary authority is brought into sharp focus by mapping the metropolitan addresses of MPs and Lords. This article digests the seasonal addresses printed in directories, pamphlets and pocketbooks for 1729, 1762, 1796 and 1843 (figs. 1–4). Clustering within a small radius, the political headquarters of the world’s leading economic power appears miniature against the full London map. A hotspot of dense occupation in the area around St James’s Palace is already evident within the earliest data taken from 1729 (fig. 1), with a

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<sup>21</sup> London residence was not compulsory for all hereditary and elected members, but essential for anyone intending to play a significant part in the affairs of state after 1688. The attendance of some groups, though, was demanded by proclamation, such as the Lords Spiritual, the Anglican bishops, who from 1714 were required to leave to their dioceses and reside in London when parliament was in session. Frank O Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History* (London, 1997), 166.

<sup>22</sup> Summerson, *Georgian London*; Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 1994).



secondary concentration around Lincoln's Inn and some spread into the City. St James's Street was a small L-shaped street in close proximity to St James's Palace, laid out in 1694 and an early destination of choice for MPs and Lords, such as MP Thomas Coke (later Vice Chamberlain to Queen Anne) who purchased a house there in 1697. By 1729 the street was home to five MPs and four peers, with many more occupying properties in the nearby St James's Square and Albermarle and Arlington Streets.

The streets surrounding St James's Palace and St James's Square remained the pre-eminent residential district for the political classes throughout the century. *The Gentleman's New Memorandum Book* for 1762 listed a London addresses for 91 per cent of the House of Commons and 93 per cent of the Lords.<sup>23</sup> Only 7 per cent of MPs (34 members) and two lone Lords (both bishops) resided in the city, with a handful of more distant outliers. As illustrated in figure 2, the overwhelming majority lived at close quarters, in streets to the west of Farringdon and south of Oxford Street. The political class continued to congregate around St James's in particular, in the newly built squares now burgeoning in the 'new town' of London's West End. Data from the 1796 edition of *A Correct List of the House of Peers and Commons of Great Britain* (fig. 3) shows a similar distribution, but with a drift northwards into yet more smart new squares, such as Manchester and Portman Square, mushrooming in Fitzrovia and a modest retreat from the City (with only thirteen MPs living east of Farringdon).<sup>24</sup> City residents usually had deep ties to the district, like Sir Robert Ladbrooke (former Lord Mayor of London and, in 1762, MP for the city of London) who lived near Blackfriars, and Sir Francis Baring, MP for Calne in 1796, but based in Bishopsgate, a merchant banker and founder of Baring Brothers. Politicians clustered even more densely around St James's by 1843 (fig. 4), but a new concentration around the increasingly important Buckingham Palace had also emerged.<sup>25</sup>

Mapping parliamentarians' addresses in this way reveals a modest City minority and a tightly-packed West End majority occupying a political square mile with court, parliament, shops, clubs and parliamentary neighbours all in close proximity. It also illuminates the topographical lure of court as well as parliament, with St James's Palace and later Buckingham Palace drawing both MPs and Lords into the streets around them. The pull of both court and

<sup>23</sup> London addresses were printed for 492 of the 535 MPs occupying seats. 213 Lords were listed, of which thirteen had no town address, usually because they were travelling abroad. *The Gentleman's New Memorandum Book Improv'd* (London, 1762).

<sup>24</sup> *A Correct list of the House of Peers and Commons of Great Britain* (London, 1796).

<sup>25</sup> *The Gentleman's Pocket Book and Almanack for 1843* (London, 1842)

parliament were key forces governing movement.

Although the political campus was clearly small and distinctive, this residential concentration was neither homogenous nor static. The great town houses were landmarks and persistent foci of faction – such as Bedford House on Bloomsbury Square, Shelburne House on Berkeley Square, Devonshire House on Piccadilly and Northumberland House on the Strand.<sup>26</sup> But even within the nobility, the necessity of a West End base could be an unwelcome cost.<sup>27</sup> Not all politicians were dripping money. Country MPs, separated from their families in the shires, set up temporary camp in or near coffee houses.<sup>28</sup> Sir Nathaniel Wraxall laughed at the new ministry ‘emerging from their obscure lodgings...’ in 1782.<sup>29</sup> Politicos often moved over the course of a career. Bachelors based themselves at clubs, in lodgings or the Inns of Court.<sup>30</sup> Elected to parliament in 1780 aged twenty, William Wilberforce used an inherited Wimbledon house as an out of town commuter base, supping and sometimes sleeping at his club on Pall Mall, but in 1786 took the lease of a house in Old Palace Yard in the shadows of parliament itself.<sup>31</sup> His friend, William Pitt the Younger, like many second sons, launched his career from Lincoln’s Inn Fields, moving to his brother’s house on Grafton Street, graduating to 10 Downing Street in 1783.<sup>32</sup> The trainee lawyer George Canning was living in Lincoln’s Inn when he made his debut in 1794. Ambition personified, he gravitated to Charles Street, St James’s Square, just two years later. There were two other MPs and one Lord listed on the same road, a further eight MPs and twelve Lords on the square, and around forty additional parliamentarians in the adjoining streets.<sup>33</sup> The trend towards central residence was marked.<sup>34</sup>

It was the regular sitting of parliament which created the need for a London residence –

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<sup>26</sup> M. H. Port, ‘West End Palaces: The Aristocratic Town House in London, 1730-1830’, *London Journal*, 20, no. 1 (1995), 17-46.

<sup>27</sup> Huntington Library (HL), STG box 7, April 17 1828 Anne Grenville, Lilies, Bucks to Anna Eliza Grenville, Duchess of Buckingham & Chandos.

<sup>28</sup> Somerset Record Office, DD/SF/4515/35, 31 Aug 1694, Mary Clarke to Edward Clarke Esq. MP to be left at Richards coffee house near Temple Barr in Fleet Street London.

<sup>29</sup> Hague, *Pitt the Younger*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> On bachelor lodging, see Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (Yale, 2010), chapter two.

<sup>31</sup> John Wolfe ‘William Wilberforce’ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29386> [accessed 5 July 2019]

<sup>32</sup> Hague, *Pitt the Younger*, 102-3.

<sup>33</sup> Canning, 20-1; *A Correct List of the House of Peers and Commons of Great Britain* (London, 1796).

<sup>34</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 79.

whether rented rooms or a freehold house - drawing a population to the West End year after year. However, the length that parliament sat varied.<sup>35</sup> Members were summoned by circular letter, and dismissed by the king.<sup>36</sup> Parliament might meet as early as October, but usually commenced by January at the latest and sat until April, May or June. After 1760, parliament was able to sit later into the summer when the royals ceased decamping to Hanover. No one could predict the exact dates, though a rough pattern was foreseeable. A spring parliamentary semester was commonplace and the following ethnography of political time presumes that the most typical day was a spring day.

## Section 2: The Political Day: Time and Movement

When did the political day begin? Later than the artisan day to be sure. Voth's calculations of time use (based on criminal trial testimony) show that the workday began about half six in the morning, slightly later in the winter, lasting till seven at night.<sup>37</sup> The diaries of London merchants reveal they were often up working before breakfast.<sup>38</sup> It was a truism that while the city of London was astir from six and thrumming by nine, the streets of the city of Westminster were deserted till noon.<sup>39</sup> Judging by aristocratic diaries, a midday rise was indeed common after a late party, but nine in the morning was a typical hour for both sexes to rise. From a glance at formal parliamentary records, one might assume that politicians set off for the house shortly after breakfast. On paper, parliament appears a well-ordered institution that ran to a consistent timetable. The official *Journals of the House of Commons* record a prompt nine o'clock morning start every day, until 1770 when the stipulated time became ten. The day always began with prayers, followed by private business (including family estate acts and enclosures) then public business (major acts and administrative expenditure). Business required a quorum of forty. However, the official paperwork reflected arcane traditions masking far more erratic timekeeping. In practice, in the early eighteenth century, public business usually commenced around two in the afternoon. The start of private business had drifted to noon by the 1750s,

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<sup>35</sup> Langford, *Public Life*, 142.

<sup>36</sup> *Canning*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> Voth, *Time*

<sup>38</sup> Perry Gauci, *Emporium of the World: The Merchants of London, 1660-1800* (London, 2007), 43-4; Ben Heller, 'Leisure and pleasure in London society, 1760-1820: an agent-centred approach' (Oxford D Phil, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> *The Connoisseur*, no. 99, Thursday Dec. 18 1755, 211.

pushing public matters to three, four, or even five o'clock and ensuring debates ran into the night.<sup>40</sup> The working day in the House of Lords was shorter, often finishing by the early evening. On special days given over to judicial business, the business might begin as early as ten or eleven in the morning, but was apt to draw more law lords than ordinary peerage.<sup>41</sup>

On any given day, the hours were unpredictable, though noblemen and MPs did not expect to spend their mornings in parliament. Personal accounts reveal that the political classes spent the first hour or so of their day in prayer, reading, and then dealing with correspondence, accounting, receiving tradesmen and attending local business errands.<sup>42</sup> After a couple of relatively quiet hours, by 10 o'clock the political elite embarked on intimate, semi-formal politicking, organized through the ritual of visiting. Appointment diaries reveal that men, as well as women, set out on frenetic rounds of morning visits. Ladies' visiting was highly ritualized, often caricatured for its tedium and inescapability, but familiar to historians of women's politics and sociability.<sup>43</sup> More attention, though, should be paid to the ways in which this was a practice shared with men, who commissioned visiting cards and participated in rounds of door knocking and mornings 'at home' with much the same intensity as women.<sup>44</sup> A dukedom did not exempt Henry Brydges from the rounds. His diary is laden with references such as this from 27 April 1763: 'I went to Mr Grenville's Levée afterwards to the King's and then made Visits.' Although it is rare to find a full account of who was visited day by day, the brevity of entries in personal papers underscore that daily 'visiting' was a taken for granted start to the political day. Take just two of myriad examples from James Harris' London diary:

6 Feb 1770 Visited many visits on foot - went to ye House

4 Feb 1779 - visited - went to Ld Norths levee - very thin - thence to ye House - very thin  
- dined at home<sup>45</sup>

Canning's watchful commentary adds a little muscle to otherwise skeletal references to this system of networking because the political novice felt under pressure to keep up. He listed

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<sup>40</sup> P. D. G. Thomas, *The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1971), 156.

<sup>41</sup> A.S. Tuberville, *The House of Lords in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1927), 5-9.

<sup>42</sup> Hague, *Pitt the Younger*, 209. Canning, 81

<sup>43</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. Mss. 61450, f. 12, Duchess of Marlborough to the Duchess of Montagu, 9 May 1711.

<sup>44</sup> For examples of men's visiting cards c 1770s-1810s, see British Museum, Sarah Sophia Banks's collection of printed ephemera.

<sup>45</sup> HRO, 9M73/G835 James Harris's London diary 1770 and 9M73/G842, 1779.

‘sundry visits – which had long been lying heavy on my hands’, or ‘long owing’. A round of visits was a means of re-announcing himself after an absence or illness, but also as a means of keeping abreast. ‘I had no sooner arrived than I set out upon a round of visits in quest of news, particularly respecting the new arrangements’.<sup>46</sup>

Face to face lobbying by domestic visit was facilitated by the fact that Lords and MPs London addresses were printed in gazetteers, no doubt encouraging both letter writing and door knocking to gain the attention of Members of Parliament.<sup>47</sup> Merchants and manufacturers visited in person to press their wares and also to urge commercial and provincial interests. Matthew Boulton was indefatigable in calling on elite clients during the parliamentary season. ‘I have yet 150 people to call upon’ he complained to his wife in March 1776. A few years previously Boulton had exploited his network of wealthy customer and patrons to seek parliamentary support for the establishment of an Assay Office in Birmingham, delivering a pamphlet outlining his arguments in its favour to each MP.<sup>48</sup> Not all of Boulton’s political forays were as successful. When he heard that Lord North’s ministry was ‘determined not to let the Birmingham [playhouse] bill pass...I did not take ye trouble to wait upon a single member of parliament’.<sup>49</sup> Evidently much politico-commercial lobbying took place on an individual basis in the homes of the powerful.

Timetabled alongside the visiting hours, the politician’s levée was another mainstay of the political morning. Originally ‘the lever’ was an intimate encounter with a monarch while they dressed, a performance further elaborated by Louis XIV with his formal grand lever and slightly more informal petit lever.<sup>50</sup> At the British court, levées were simply semi-formal receptions at which the monarch met his ministers, other politicians and those who could acquire a formal introduction. Political leaders held levées modelled on the monarch’s levée in their town house or court apartments, a practice that can be gleaned from scattered references in letters, diaries and also from newspapers notices advertising their timings and location. In 1709,

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<sup>46</sup> *Canning*, 51, 53, 76, 77, 96, 137, 221.

<sup>47</sup> Bob Harris, ‘Parliamentary Legislation, Lobbying and the Press in Eighteenth-Century Scotland’, *Parliamentary History*, vol 26 issue 1 Feb 2007, 76-95.

<sup>48</sup> Sally Baggott ‘Hegemony and Hallmarking: Matthew Boulton and the battle for the Birmingham Assay Office’ in Kenneth Quickenden, Sally Baggott and Malcolm Dick eds., *Matthew Boulton: Enterprising Industrialist of the Enlightenment* (Routledge, 2016), 147 - 162

<sup>49</sup> Birmingham City Archive, MS 3782/16/1/40 & 62, Matthew Boulton to Anne Boulton, Undated and April 30 1777.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, 1994), 87, 91, 131, 187.

Peter Wentworth, younger brother of diplomat Lord Raby, got up early to attend the Lord Treasurer's levée on a Thursday morning in order to press some business on behalf of his brother.<sup>51</sup> Ministerial levées were even held on a Sunday during the political season.<sup>52</sup> The politician's levée appears to be a male preserve and micro court. No refreshment was served, presumably because the purpose was firmly business not leisure. Satires poked fun at the circles of sycophancy and indeed levées could be read as all pomp and no substance, epitomizing the perceived toadying of Old Corruption. Nevertheless, attendance at ministerial levées was routine.<sup>53</sup> Moreover if they were empty of function, why did the ousted Robert Walpole timetable a levée in competition with his successor Lord Wilmington in 1742?<sup>54</sup> Doubtless the host aimed to consolidate support, offer a venue for the exchange of political information, dispense patronage and discipline his troops, while the guest aimed to display loyalty, gain favour, gather information and to belong.<sup>55</sup> Cumulative references suggest levées were an early form of office hour and political surgery, with a strong element of whipping.<sup>56</sup>

Both the personal visit and group gathering at a levée were meetings at which partisan efforts were synchronized and parliamentary outcomes engineered. The high Tory MP for Cirencester, Lord Bathurst, held a meeting of key Tories at his London house in April 1725 to achieve a consensus for the parliamentary debate on the reinstatement of the erstwhile Jacobite Viscount Bolingbroke. The pre-meeting paid off; just five Tories voted against. Similarly when the Mortmain bill menaced the endowments of Oxford University in March 1736, one of the MPs for Oxford hosted powerful Tories and the party's leading lawyer to draft the University's petition against the bill at his London lodgings.<sup>57</sup> Scottish MPs held regular meetings at the British Coffee House on Cockspur Street in the 1780s to collaborate, even taking minutes.<sup>58</sup> Political business was often conducted before hours in domestic or quasi-domestic settings on an ad hoc basis, but was nevertheless vital to legislative outcomes.

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<sup>51</sup> *The Wentworth Papers 1705 - 1739: Selected from the private and family correspondence of Thomas Wentworth, Lord Raby* ed. James J. Cartwright (London, 1883), 74

<sup>52</sup> *Canning*, 82.

<sup>53</sup> See Sir Hector McCrafty's description of a ministerial levee in Charles Macklin, *The Man of the World*. HL, Larpent MSS, LA311 ff.9v-10r. Thanks to David O'Shaughnessy for this reference.

<sup>54</sup> Helen Sard Hughes (ed), *The Gentle Hertford: Her Life and Letters* (New York, 1940), 185-87.

<sup>55</sup> James J Cartwright, *The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739* (London, 1883), 74.

<sup>56</sup> The party 'Whip' is a later creation, however the hunting term of 'whipping in' had been deployed in a political context from at least 1742. Thomas, *House of Commons*, cites two examples of the use of the term in 1742 and 17

<sup>57</sup> Colley, *Oligarchy*, 70.

<sup>58</sup> Harris, 'Lobbying', 86.

Once visits and levee attendance was completed the late morning was typically given over to attendance at court, at least by those in favour with the crown. While Georgian Britain was hardly the ancien regime, it was a parliamentary monarchy not a parliamentary democracy and the court was far from politically obsolete. Nor was the House of Lords a cipher, for the peers exercised executive control and moreover were closely interconnected to the members of the Commons through kinship networks, provincial ties and patronage. Stable administrations balanced on ‘the twin pillars of Court and Parliament’ and the support of both king and Commons was a pre-requisite of parliamentary leadership.<sup>59</sup> The monarch’s opinion was decisive in foreign policy and ministerial appointments. The veto of unpalatable policies and the dissolution of parliament remained royal prerogatives and the crown’s purse paid for all government except the armed forces.

Executive power emanated from the first minister and his monarch, the outer cabinet, which comprised monarch, officers of the crown and key ministers, and the inner cabinet that prepared materials for the consideration of the outer. The outer cabinet met at the monarch’s residence, whilst the inner cabinet met at Whitehall. Consisting of only six to eight members, over time the inner cabinet commandeered greater power. Typically, the monarch had a daily audience with their first minister, several closet meetings a week with other ministers, as well as attending outer cabinet meetings. By convention, cabinets lasted two to three hours and were held before debates heated up in parliament.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the Georgian monarchs and the Princes of Wales all hosted male-only levées multiple times a week at St James’ Palace, bringing ministers and noblemen together to hobnob in comparative seclusion. By the second half of the eighteenth century, royal levées were advertised beginning between noon and half past one, sometimes followed by a council meeting, only breaking up towards four in the afternoon.<sup>61</sup> Consequently for many ministers and peers about half of what would be considered the ‘working day’ today was potentially spent at court. In the excitements of emerging parliamentary democracy, it is easy to forget that the court was the leading political venue.

The role of the executive was to further ‘the King’s business’.<sup>62</sup> ‘Nobody can carry on the

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<sup>59</sup> John Beattie, *The English Court in the Reign of George I* (Cambridge, 1967), 217-8. For restatements see Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture 1714-1760* (Cambridge, 2006), Greig, *Beau Monde*, 105-107.

<sup>60</sup> For more details on cabinets, see Peter Jupp, *The Governing of Britain 1688-1848* (London, 2006), 23-5.

<sup>61</sup> *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, Thurs Feb 1 1776, *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening post*, 20 Feb 1776

<sup>62</sup> Jupp, *Governing*, 34-5.

King's business if he is not supported at Court' Walpole observed in 1716. A political leader had to reward his parliamentary supporters to survive and being seen to influence the monarch's appointments was read as an index of political power. Equally an inability to do so might lead to a haemorrhage of support in parliament.<sup>63</sup> The crown remained the fountain of patronage, though the Georges delegated much of the dispensation (apart from military preferment, a massive dominion for a nation so much at war) to their acolytes, who also had to be assuaged. Court spaces were often highly partisan. Royal favour was a Whig possession after 1714. For forty-six years, Tory nobles held no state offices, their wives passed over as courtiers and rarely invited to court assemblies. When Sir Robert Walpole resigned in February 1742, the bulk of the Tory parliamentary party 'marched from its London headquarters at the Cocoa Tree Coffee-house to the King's levée at St James', demanding and parading their return to power.<sup>64</sup> Access to court was certainly not evenly distributed amongst all MPs, for those in opposition were often snubbed by the monarch (but warmly welcomed by the Princes of Wales) while those who sat firmly on the backbenches were less likely to attend. Nonetheless, that ministers had to be successful courtiers was taken for granted by contemporaries and, whether respect was paid to the monarch or to an heir, the court in its broadest definition was fully integrated into the rhythm of political life.

The eighteenth-century court was scattered across a series of palaces. After Whitehall Palace, and most of its 1500 rooms, went up in flames in 1698, there was no pre-eminent royal headquarters. Ceremony and residence diverged, with Kensington and the Queen's House lodging the royals and attendants, while St James's became the venue for balls and drawing rooms. Meanwhile successive Princes of Wales set up disaffected rival courts in aggrandized town houses, Leicester house, on Leicester Square and at the end of the century, Carlton House near Pall Mall. This dispersal of royal sites integrated the court within the metropolitan landscape, exposing the ritualistic performances of royalty to the public gaze. Courtiers, attendants and acolytes flowed from room to room, street to street, location to location. With dispersal came permeability. There were no formal invitations or security measures. Regularly attending ministers could take guests to the King's levées and diplomats, courtiers, peers and

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<sup>63</sup> Beattie, *Court*, 150, 248.

<sup>64</sup> Colley, *Oligarchy*, 27.



politicians met and mingled within the palace walls.<sup>65</sup> Access to the more public court events depended upon a nod from the ushers on the door; hence these were the most open to well-dressed pretenders. Josiah Wedgwood liked to loiter in the corridors, touting for business.<sup>66</sup> Diaries of both men and women reveal regular attendance was the norm.<sup>67</sup> As ministers had no choice but spend hours in attendance, informal meetings among politicians were common in the environs of court. Complex rules controlled conduct within the palace walls and whilst cabinet meetings would be dedicated to parliamentary talk, such business was not permitted at larger events such as a drawing room or ball. Lord Chesterfield complained of the ‘small talk’ essential in a courtier: ‘a sort of middling conversation, neither silly nor edifying’ encompassing European diplomacy, armies, uniforms, royal marriages and entertainments in London. Court information may sound flippant but it was not devoid of political content for those who knew how to massage its systems. Dorothy Meadows, for example, learnt of the continuing threat of the old Pretender from ambassadorial chat at court in 1719.<sup>68</sup> Crucially, as illuminated in the maps above, the court remained a key part of London’s political fabric and a key node of the political campus.

As the day wore on the active MPs and lords gravitated south towards the Houses of Parliament itself. MPs began to enter the chamber between two and five in the afternoon. Unlike the iconic building that stands by the Thames today, the old Palace of Westminster had no purpose-built parliamentary accommodation. Parliament stood on the old royal plot, but it was a warren of building, not a single edifice. The Lords convened in the Queen’s Chamber, a medieval hall. A French observer was astonished in 1765 that ‘The house of peers ... is a narrow hall of so little extent, that often times part of the lords, finding it entirely occupied, either remain confounded with the people who crowd the inside of the bar, or are under a necessity of retiring’.<sup>69</sup> The Commons were squeezed into a deconsecrated chapel, St Stephens, which could accommodate only half the MPs. A Prussian visitor was bemused to see ‘the whole of the British nation assembled in its representatives, in rather a mean-looking building, that not a little

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<sup>65</sup> see Smith *Georgian Monarchy*, 227-234

<sup>66</sup> See Katherine Euphemia, Lady Farrar (ed) *The Letters of Josiah Wedgwood, vol 1, 1762 - 1770* (Manchester, 1903), 38.

<sup>67</sup> James Harris MP attended a court drawing room every week in 1770 - HRO, 9M73/G835, London Diary of James Harris 1770. Frederick Robinson attended a levée and drawing room once a fortnight in 1778. BRO, L30/14/333/97 Frederick Robinson to Thomas Robinson, Whitehall, 22 May 1778. James Brydges, 3rd Duke of Chandos records 'court' in his diary up to four times a week. HL, ST vol cix col iii, 1786.

<sup>68</sup> *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son* vol 3 (London, 1774), 181, Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 238.

<sup>69</sup> M Grosley, *A Tour of London, or New Observations on England* (London, 1772, trans by T Nugent), vol 2, 192.

resembles a chapel.<sup>70</sup> Plans from William Kent and John Soane to redesign and rebuild were defeated. Only the arrival of an extra 100 Irish members in 1801 forced limited alterations.<sup>71</sup> Both MPs and Lords circulated the parliamentary complex, listening to each other's debates from the galleries and watching legal proceedings in Westminster Hall, a massive building open to the public, lined with small 'Shops of Books, Prints, Toys'.<sup>72</sup> The impressions of tourists demonstrate the permeability of the chambers to witnesses.<sup>73</sup> Spectators of both sexes were allowed into the Stranger's Galleries in the Commons until the late 1770s, after which women were disbarred. By the early 1800s, women with contacts could sit in the attic and listen to debates via the ventilation shaft in the ceiling of the Commons.<sup>74</sup> Custom allowed noblewomen a degree of access to the Lords, to observe certain ceremonies, such as the state opening of parliament.<sup>75</sup> Ladies forced themselves into the House of Lords en masse to listen to the heated debates in March 1739 in the build-up to war against Spain, and mobbed the chamber to hear the Regency bill in 1765. Gentlemen might have aggrandized 'politicks' as a male preserve and Westminster as its Spartan citadel, yet the fortress was permeable, well trafficked and insufficient to its function. Its paladins had to operate across civilian space *faute de mieux*.

The architectural deficiencies of parliament forced activity off-site. The overspill of party business was soaked up by the chocolate and coffee houses of the new West End in the early eighteenth century, in St James's Street, on Pall Mall and the Strand and around Covent Garden. Over time, key coffee houses morphed into private clubs, and new clubs were established.<sup>76</sup> Both coffee houses and clubs served as libraries, hubs of communication, and committee rooms.<sup>77</sup> Statesmen's London houses, located at the heart of the political campus, were political engine

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<sup>70</sup> Karl Moritz, *Travels in England* in 1782, chapter 5.

<sup>71</sup> See Claire Wilkinson, 'Politics and Topography in the Old House of Commons 1783 - 1834', *Parliamentary History*, vol 21, issue 1 (February 2002), 141-165.

<sup>72</sup> Anne Saunders (ed), *The London Letters of Samuel Molyneux, 1712-13* (London, 2011), 43.

<sup>73</sup> HL, *Bostonian Diary*, 1768-9, facing f.54.

<sup>74</sup> See <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/parliamentary-collections/collections-19thc-and-suffragists/ventilator/>

<sup>75</sup> Peeresses in their own right enjoyed the privilege of sitting in the House of Lords, but all passed the privilege onto their male heirs. John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1984), 11.

<sup>76</sup> John Timbs, *Club Life of London* (1866); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee House* (New Haven, 2005), 170-71, Roger Fulford, *Boodle's 1762 - 1962* (London 1962), 3.

<sup>77</sup> Colley, *Oligarchy*, 75. Wildman's club on Albermarle Street, the base of the younger Newcastle Whigs in 1760s, even employed a press agent, Brewer, *Party*, 61.

rooms built and decorated for public life.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile executive business was ‘departmentalised’ not ‘centralised’, despatched at the Admiralty, the Treasury, the Board of Trade and Plantations and other government offices in Whitehall. An emergent civil service did the routine work, but policy was driven (at least notionally) by political appointees, often cabinet ministers.<sup>79</sup> In 1734, George II gifted 10 Downing Street to Robert Walpole as the official residence of the first Lord of the Treasury. Political business was decentred by both internal constraints and external developments.

The eighteenth-century day was not divided as would be familiar now into morning, lunchtime, afternoon, evening and night. Instead the major divide was dinnertime in the late afternoon, with everything beforehand consisting of one long morning. Mealtimes were shifting as the century progressed and varied by social rank. The middling ate at one, but the quality dined much later, at four o’clock in the 1770s and as late as six o’clock by the 1790s. Consequently fashionable dinnertime and the opening of public business in the house coincided and the disruption of meals and ceremony is a common theme of politician’s diaries.<sup>80</sup> How did parliamentary men adapt? In his first term as an MP, Canning expected to dine after the Commons, but he became convinced that he was undermining his constitution and had to adapt on Doctor’s orders. When Canning received a tempting dinner invitation, he ducked out of long debates altogether. He reported the Prime Minister postponing a key debate to keep a former dinner engagement, and on one occasion found himself lying to the house that Pitt was delayed by ‘*superior* business’ when in fact his leader was tucking into ‘a hearty dinner’. Some man dinners were also expressly political occasions, used as yet another opportunity in the day to consolidate strategies. Pitt the younger hosted ministerial dinners at the opening of every session, marking the start of the political season with a gathering of power.<sup>81</sup>

Parliamentary business drifted later in the day and by the 1780s public business usually began at four o’clock. However, there were occasional variations and it was still possible to be caught out with MPs turning up too early or too late for the main business of each day. Many members complained, but to no avail for no formal rule was set.<sup>82</sup> As afternoon commencements

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<sup>78</sup> Maria Perry, *The House in Berkeley Square A History of the Lansdowne Club* (2003).

<sup>79</sup> Jupp, *Governing*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> HRO, 9M73/G836, London Diary 1771, 9 January, 11 February, 4 March, 20 March, 24 April.

<sup>81</sup> *Canning*, 102, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, *Commons*, 161.

became the norm, other political business filled the preceding hours. Government officers might attend their boards in Whitehall, though board meetings were often sparse.<sup>83</sup> Committee meetings multiplied as the amount of legislation swelled over the century. In the 1753 session alone, over eighty committees were established, mostly inquiring into local bids for improvement.<sup>84</sup>

Debates not only started later as the century progressed they also lasted longer on average. Business was no longer so dependent on daylight with improved lighting introduced with Sir Christopher Wren's refurbishments from 1692 and daily sittings of eight hours were common in George III's reign.<sup>85</sup> The longest continuous sitting occurred during the contentious Westminster election of 1784, lasting a full nineteen hours from ten in the morning until a red-eyed five in the morning the following day. Parliamentary resolutions suggest that members could eat or sleep in the chamber, but they were not allowed to read or smoke.<sup>86</sup> Especially dutiful wives sent in provisions to keep their spouses going, and Walpole ostentatiously munched Norfolk apples.<sup>87</sup> 'It is not uncommon to see a member lying stretched out on one of the benches, while others are debating' reported a young Prussian tourist in 1782. 'Some crack nuts, others eat oranges, or whatever else is in season.'<sup>88</sup>

Some caution is required, however, when aligning a changing pattern of business to the timetable of a political day for longer sittings did not necessarily connote longer attendance. The official House of Commons record of the length of the day of business is no guide to how long any individual MP stayed. Dipping in and out of the house was certainly unremarkable. In March 1771, James Harris noted: 'went thither [parliament] at three - came away for 2 hours to Bachs concert - returned to the house and stayed till two.'<sup>89</sup> On Canning's first day in parliament, the debate began at four in the afternoon, lasting till five the following morning. Despite his exhilaration, the debutante spent little of the marathon session in the chamber. 'During the dull

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<sup>83</sup> When Sylvester Douglas attended his first board meeting at the Treasury in 1797, he was reassured 'There are seldom boards. Mr Pitt does all the material business at his own house'. When Douglas was made Paymaster General in 1801, he expected to spend a couple of hours every morning at the Pay Office in Whitehall. Francis Bickley (ed), *The Diaries of Sylvester Douglas, Lord Glenverbie* 2 vols (London, 1928), i, 128, 211.

<sup>84</sup> Jupp, *Governing*, 56, 79.

<sup>85</sup> Wilkinson, 'Politics and Topography'.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas, *House of Commons*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> See Mrs Hervey to 'Mr Hervey to the parliament house' 3 February 1695, in *Letter Books of John Hervey, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Bristol* vol 1, 98; John Field *The Story of Parliament in the Palace of Westminster* (London, 2007), 146

<sup>88</sup> Moritz, *England*, 53.

<sup>89</sup> HRO, 9M73/G836 James Harris's London diary, March 1771.

parts of the debate I went out several times to dine...to drink tea, to see what was going forward in the House of Lords.’ On another occasion, uninterested in a debate on Scottish law, ‘I set off ...to dine with the Chief Baron and Lady Louisa Macdonald – who live not a hundred yards off in Parliament Street – leaving order with the doorkeeper where I was, that I might be sent for in case of a division.’ Canning met two other politicians there and all were summoned back at nine in the evening to vote. After participating in the division, Canning left for the opera, and thence to supper with Mrs Crewe.<sup>90</sup> Once in the Houses of Commons and Lords, men were hardly in lockdown, sealed off from society. The tourist observer Carl Moritz concluded in 1782 that ‘there is no end to their going in and out’.<sup>91</sup>

Personal accounts make clear the links between parliament and broader social activity during the London season, drawing together the timetables of both men and women at mixed sex evening events, and several historians have noted the intermingling of pleasure and politics amongst the fashionable. As day turned to night, formal parliamentary ‘business’ was usually shelved for amusement after dinner and MPs and peers drifted back towards the West End and its commercial resorts or to private evening parties. Complaints about a dearth of men after a late sitting at the house were common but the reverse was also true, with the demands of evening entertainments disrupting the formal business of parliament. For example, in April 1787, a private performance of *The Way To Keep Him* at Richmond House on Whitehall occupied so many parliamentarians that a motion in the House of Commons had to be deferred.<sup>92</sup> The political day continued late into the night in private and public. The new town houses were machines for mass entertainment, far more spacious than the cramped accommodation of the Commons and Lords.<sup>93</sup> Assemblies in the great town houses were considered parties given by the hostess, not the host, and the leading political hostesses excelled in blending delight and diplomacy, turning their drawing rooms into factional headquarters.<sup>94</sup> Assemblies were held weekly by leading hostesses on different nights, though deliberate clashes were not unknown to

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<sup>90</sup> Canning, 46, 62-3.

<sup>91</sup> Moritz, *England*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Gillian Russell, *Theatres of War: Performance, Politics and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1995), 125. See also Elaine Chalus, ‘Elite Women, Social Politics and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England’, *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 3, 669-697.

<sup>93</sup> The *London Chronicle* noted 1500 people of distinction at a reception at Northumberland House in 1764 – a court Whig stronghold. Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Harmondsworth, 1980), 181-212.

<sup>94</sup> Lewis, *Patriotism*, 100, Chalus, *Elite Women*, 84-100.

force waverers to show their hand.<sup>95</sup> Descriptions evoke the same fixed circle familiar from the court events and ministerial levees of earlier in the day.<sup>96</sup> The lady's assembly was the evening counterpart of the minister's morning levée. The scale of men's participation reflects their significance. Fostering the political hostesses facilitated promotion, while neglect might prove a brake. Despite his disdain for female politicians, Canning was an assiduous attendee of evening assemblies. His diaries for 1793-5 report attendance at forty seven salons and suppers of the Whig hostess Mrs Crewe, thirty six visits to the Countess of Sutherland, thirty four to Lady Malmesbury, ten evenings at Lady Payne's and nine dinners at Lady Charlotte Greville's.<sup>97</sup> Thus his actions countermand his words, for his habitual practice reveals the unremarkable integration of women's evening assemblies within male politician's routines.

Politicking continued across fashionable commercial venues. James Harris kept a running record of political conversations he had when 'at leisure', seizing his moments for a private word. 'I met Ld Temple at the opera - I express my satisfaction on ye speech he had made in ye Lords house.'<sup>98</sup> That the opera should be a site of political conversation is hardly surprising given that two thirds of the male subscribers to the opera in 1783, were, or had been, MPs or peers of the realm.<sup>99</sup> Frederick Robinson attended the opera in search of cronies not entertainment. The opera itself 'is long & dull... but I always go as I am sure to meet all my acquaintance of all sorts there'.<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile the main playhouses ran daily performances (excluding Sundays) in the season. With curtain up at seven in the evening the schedule could run for up to five hours, but dropping in for a single act was common. Auditoria were as well-lit as the boxes, so political fortunes, allegiances and moods could all be broadcast from the boxes.<sup>101</sup>

The fashionable night glittered well beyond midnight. The circulation of political information 'after hours' is stressed by Chalus and Russell who note the airing of government business

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<sup>95</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 91, Greig, *Beau Monde*, 132-134.

<sup>96</sup> *Coke*, vol 1, 178.

<sup>97</sup> Calculated by Peter Jupp in 'The Roles of Royal and Aristocratic Women in British Politics, c. 1782-1832' in Mary O Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), *Chattel, Servant or Citizen: Women's Status in Church, State and Society* (Belfast, 1993), 111.

<sup>98</sup> HRO, 9M73/G762, 'Memorandums in London Nov and Dec 1775, Jan 1776.

<sup>99</sup> William Weber, 'L'Institution et son Public: L'Opera a Paris et a Londres au XVIIIe siècle', *Annales*, 6 (1993), 1519-1539.

<sup>100</sup> Bedford Record Office, WPP, Frederick Robinson to Thomas Robinson, Whitehall 9 February 1779, L30/14/333/177.

<sup>101</sup> Earl of Bessborough (ed), *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1955), 104.

within heterosocial spaces like the opera and the assembly.<sup>102</sup> Information raced around St James's leaping from venue to venue. Most politicians heard about Lord Howe's naval victory in June 1794 at the Opera House when Lady Chatham carried the information there from the Admiralty.<sup>103</sup> Sensational news of the surrender to the Americans at Saratoga was first disclosed by Lord Derby at Almack's. Edmund Burke claimed that he had heard 'from the rebound of Almack's' in advance of the government announcement. Given the spatial contiguity of the assembly room and the gentleman's club concludes Russell 'there is likely to have been a two-way traffic of information between the two establishments, and we cannot assume that the traffic was gendered in terms of the assembly's exchanging news of marriages and adulteries for the club's news of politics and war. Political information was just as likely to have originated in the assembly rooms in King Street.'<sup>104</sup>

What time did the long political day finally end? As parliament sat longer over the course of century, active members necessarily submitted to later hours. When divisions continued into the night in the Commons in the 1790s, Canning did not get to bed till after six in the morning, though even after a shorter session, he took in the Opera or the Playhouse and supped afterwards.<sup>105</sup> Later parliamentary evenings drove entertainment into the small hours. Gossip reported that 'Lord Derby's chef gave notice... because he would be killed if he had to go on cooking suppers at 3.a.m.'<sup>106</sup> Mature socialites certainly believed that social hours were running later in the last quarter of the century.<sup>107</sup> Whinging about an inability to keep up was common, though unsurprisingly the young were livelier than the old.<sup>108</sup> Heller argues that frailer socialites were marginalized by the later hours.<sup>109</sup> One could add that those lacking stamina might be disadvantaged politically too. With entertainments lasting till four or five in the morning bedtimes at six were not unusual for the governing families. De-rigging took time too. So the political day finally closes past dawn, though still not quite then for the servants.

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<sup>102</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 81-3. And Russell, *Sociability*, 67.

<sup>103</sup> *Canning*, 121.

<sup>104</sup> Russell, *Sociability*, 67.

<sup>105</sup> *Canning*, 81.

<sup>106</sup> Horace Walpole, *Letters*, vol x, 65.

<sup>107</sup> *Boscawen*, 166, Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavor (eds) *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox, 1745-1826* (London, 1901), vol 2, 291.

<sup>108</sup> Suffolk Record Office, HA 513/4/123, Duchess of Grafton's Diary for the year 1791; *Granville Leveson Gower*, vol 1, 82.

<sup>109</sup> Heller, 'Leisure', 58.

### Section 3 Political Time, Circulation and Decentred Politics

‘To modern eyes the striking characteristic of the parliamentary day is the improvident and casual use of time’ apologizes Peter Thomas in his study of the eighteenth-century House of Commons. ‘Not enough value had yet to be placed on parliamentary time for it to require any organization or even any definition; the century never saw a fixed hour for the beginning or end of proceedings. The convenience of members took precedence over any pressure of business.’<sup>110</sup> However this critique owes much to modern ideas about a clock in, clock out working day, and a formal distinction between work and leisure. It is anachronistic in its implication of a casual approach to politics. Given what is now known about the importance of social politics - of the surrounding streets, spaces, clubs, and houses as places where politics happened - this ‘improvident’ parliamentary timetable is arguably better interpreted as one that further reinforces the contemporary weight placed on interpersonal sociability and extra-parliamentary transactions. The use of time was strategic rather than improvident.

A politician’s day might certainly look decadent when compared with other Londoners. Merchants’ days were marked by early rising and early bedtimes and were regimented by the bells of the Royal Exchange.<sup>111</sup> Servants had the most demanding days of all: up with the lark, but loitering into the early hours, awaiting their employer’s pleasure. By stark contrast, there was many a Lord or MP who would only deign to come to Westminster as early as November if the nation was on the brink of war, while race meetings could bealm legislation, if not gossip.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Sir Robert Walpole famously abolished Saturday sittings at the house to preserve one clear day for hunting. It is not the purpose of this analysis to present eighteenth-century politicians as model public servants. However, to broaden one’s definition of the political is to view contemporary time management and pleasures from a different perspective. Much work on time in the eighteenth century focuses on attempts to impose order, while this study reveals immense flux, and hectic business around the clock.

The political day recreated here belonged to the powerful. The political day of a radical servant, a dissenting merchant, or indeed an MP back in his constituency would likely have had a

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<sup>110</sup> Thomas, *Commons*, 168

<sup>111</sup> Gauci, *Merchants*, 43-4, Ann Saunders ed., *The Royal Exchange* (London Topographical Society No 152 1997); Natasha Glaisyer *The Culture of Commerce in England 1660 – 1720* (Martlesham, 2011), Anne Murphy ‘Clock-Watching’.

<sup>112</sup> *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, vol. III., 538.



different shape. This political day was enacted on a tiny stage. Indeed a politics built on circulation between town house, court, club, coffee house, parliament, theatre and opera was *only* possible because the distances involved were small and most could be covered rapidly even on foot. For instance, St James's Square was a mere minute's walk from St James's Street, Brookes's and White's clubs. St James's Palace gate was at the end of the road, five minutes from many an MP and peer's front door. The walk from the top of St James's street to the gate of the House of Lords could have been completed in around twenty minutes. Journeys could be much faster in Hackney carriages which operated a fixed fare of one shilling between parliamentary buildings and the streets of the West End.<sup>113</sup> Sedan chairs were even quicker in traffic. The propinquity of home, clubs, court and parliament is striking. Commentators today tend to talk about the political village, but this has become a stale metaphor. More apt for eighteenth-century London is to consider high political turf as akin to a campus.

This campus was thronging. The diaspora of politics created constant traffic around St James's and Westminster, as members, officials, ladies, lobbyists, secretaries, messengers, servants, sedan chairs and coaches had to weave between court, parliament and ministers' palatial houses. The footfall of the powerful drove legislation.<sup>114</sup> Westminster was one of the first 'towns' in the country for which far-reaching street legislation was passed – the Westminster Paving Act of 1762. It empowered trustees to manage lighting the streets too.<sup>115</sup> By the later eighteenth century, Westminster's pavements and all-night illumination were the envy of Europe.

The smallness of the campus also facilitated the interweaving of different sections of the political class – the courtiers, the lords and the commons. The daily schedule of each individual might differ in priorities, rhythm and routes, though parties, interest groups and families cutting across all three coalesced at levées and clubs, assemblies, dinners, theatre and opera. It seems likely that men and women in political families choreographed their days to maximum socio-political advantage. Word of mouth was effective in such close quarters. International, military and diplomatic news came first to ambassadors at court and the monarch. Women might pick up

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<sup>113</sup> Hackney carriage rates were routinely within the published lists of MPs and Lords addresses.

<sup>114</sup> M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925; Harmondsworth, 1966), 107-111.

<sup>115</sup> The first of numerous House of Commons committees on improving the streets of Westminster was convened in 1709 and there was also a pilot paving scheme on Pall Mall. Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London 2012), 41-2

sensational intelligence by letter from a relative abroad, in a drawing room, or at the ambassadress's assembly, long before MPs got wind of it.<sup>116</sup> The use of time and the geographies of the political day indicate that parliament was not the single epicentre of political information.

In mapping a notional day, this analysis is not blind to change over time. From the Whig monopoly of government and Tory opposition, to the disintegration of the old two-party system in the 1760s and 70s, from the Wilkite provocation, to genuine movements for political reform, the flux in political alignments and policies over the century are too many to chronicle here. However, structural changes had a direct impact on the daily practice, places and spaces of politics. As coffee houses gave way to private political clubs, a growing professionalization of party is discernible. Meanwhile, an uneven separation of politics and bureaucracy was in slow progress.<sup>117</sup> By the reign of George II, interest groups and their lobbies were making themselves felt at Westminster. By the 1800s the blossoming of associational life, pressure groups and Christian campaigns multiplied the arenas of alternative political debate in Westminster, as elsewhere.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, the West End location of the political campus and its overarching shape and systems were retained, successfully assimilating and accommodating such change. It is more the remarkable continuity of the rhythm of the political day, across the century and shared by politicians of different ranks and political hues that emerges from the sources.

The porousness of the old Palace of Westminster has been established for the early seventeenth century. Far from being a closed world, Chris Kyle argues that Westminster palace and 'its enclaves' were 'a living and working environment for a wide cross-section of the populace', concluding that Westminster's 'public nature' was 'one of its most important elements and an intrinsic part of [its] culture.'<sup>119</sup> This article supports and expands Kyle's approach to political space and activity. The fire of 1697 and the exponential growth of parliamentary business accelerated the overflow of political business across the city of Westminster, decentred away from the chambers themselves.

The system of circulation worked with a small face-to-face model of statesmanship and

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<sup>116</sup> Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 216; Coke, vol 1, 184.

<sup>117</sup> Brewer, *Sinews*, passim.

<sup>118</sup> Claire Midgeley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (Routledge, 1997), Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds), *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860* (Macmillan, 2000), Kathryn Gleadle, 'British Women and Radical Politics in the Late Nonconformist Enlightenment, c.1780-1830' in Vickery, *Politics*, 123-151.

<sup>119</sup> Chris R Kyle, 'Parliament and the Palace of Westminster: An exploration of public space in the early seventeenth century, *Parliamentary History*, vol 21 issue 1 (Feb 2002), 85-98.

political activity. Around 712 MPs and Lords made up the political core in early eighteenth-century Westminster. By the early nineteenth century the cohort had swelled to 920, though these figures do not include civil servants, assistants, political agents and so on. It seems likely that by the turn of the nineteenth century, political cohesion and effectiveness were harder to achieve using the old informal methods. Early data suggests a widening of social networks across the century and expanded webs of alliance would have taken increasing effort to maintain.<sup>120</sup> Already the largest city in Western Europe in 1700, London was still growing fast and the emergence of new residential concentrations in the 1840s around Buckingham Palace suggest an expansion of the political map. Sedan chairs became obsolete, as two bearers could no longer carry a passenger across the metropolis.<sup>121</sup> Managing a political interest across court, parliament and town, longer and longer into the night day after day across the course of lengthier political seasons was surely punishing, especially given the rivers of alcohol involved. The 1780s to around 1820 were the zenith of elite hard drinking and fast living, the epitome of Georgian excess. Such a political life style was unsustainable - Pitt the Younger was dead at forty six, and Charles James Fox at fifty six. Heavy drinking and raucous politicking after hours were eschewed by the later Victorian political establishment, who preferred clearer boundaries and a little sherry.<sup>122</sup> As palatial entertainment venues flowered in the metropolis, the architectural deficiencies of parliament became even more glaring.<sup>123</sup> The clock was ticking on the lifespan of such a hectic political day. It has been suggested that in the aftermath of the 1830s Great Reform Act, politicians purposefully distanced themselves from the blended and hedonistic socio-politics of previous political generation. Perhaps just as decisive for the demise of the eighteenth-century political culture was the fire of 1834 that consumed the old parliamentary warren, forcing architectural reconstruction and ushering in a new spatial regime.

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<sup>120</sup> Preliminary network analysis on the papers of the Countess of Strafford (1710) and the Countess of Bristol (1711) suggest their core female networks consisted of only eight and thirteen women respectively. In stark contrast Lady Mary Coke maintained a visiting network of around forty three. In the 1790s, the Duchess of Grafton engaged with a regular network of thirty women hosting parties and assemblies. Countesses of Strafford and Bristol maintained most of their contacts through visits. Weekly assemblies were rare, held only by the absolute powerbrokers - the Duchess of Marlborough and the Duchess of Shrewsbury. In contrast, in the 1790s, the Duchess of Grafton was drowning in invitations to weekly assemblies run by ambitious hostesses and often went to three a night.

<sup>121</sup> The last sedan chair stand in London could be found on St James's street in 1821. Mary Anne Garry 'Sedan Chairmen in Eighteenth-Century London', *The Journal of Transport History* 37, 1 (2016), 60.

<sup>122</sup> Charles Ludington, *The Politics of Wine in Britain: A New Cultural History* (New York, 2013), 219, 224.

<sup>123</sup> Grosley, *Tour*, vol 2, 192.

This article has purposefully mapped time management and movement shared by a range of political actors. It is worth reflecting, however, on how far a political day might differ by party allegiance. Between 1715 and 1760 the day was likely to be more distinctly factional. During this ‘Whig Ascendancy’ the court would have played a limited role in the political day of high Tory families.<sup>124</sup> As political allegiances realigned from the 1760s, the old institutional distinctions dissolved and by the 1790s it is clear that aspiring politicians of whatever stripe had to attend the soirées of political hostesses. The debates might differ across London, but the social burden remained the same. Naturally the political day might also vary over the peaks and troughs of a career, and movement in and out of office.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, our maps of political addresses reveal local heterogeneity. Different political interests lived shoulder to shoulder in the West End, particularly around St James’s Palace, in a dense and mixed society of politicians. Focusing on the institutional and exclusive elements of the political day is not to deny the validity of broader definitions of political engagement. Politicians were well aware of the power of the press, coffee house debate, the petitions of interest groups and ‘publick opinion’, coined by 1731.<sup>126</sup> Even great magnates realised that political loyalties might be built outside court, parliament, and aristocratic town house.<sup>127</sup> Occasionally patrician and popular political space overlapped.<sup>128</sup> In the course of a day, a parliamentarian might peruse the caricatures in the print shops lining Westminster Hall, pick up party gossip at the club, grind his teeth at the papers, have a petition thrust into his hands at the doors of the House, watch a satirical play with his wife, and discuss European events with a mixed company. Gentlemen were educated in rhetoric, debate and classical political theory. Elite women typically spoke several modern languages and read avidly. Statesmen were aware of and even sponsored new ideas and politicians swam in the same turbid sea of ideas as everyone else.<sup>129</sup>

Parliamentarians had to come to terms with the press. Many politicians saw journalistic

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<sup>124</sup> Colley, *Oligarchy*, 83.

<sup>125</sup> For instance, George Bubb Dodington's routine was centred on Leicester House and the rival court of Frederick, Prince of Wales in the 1740s, but after the heir's premature death in 1751, he was out of favour at George II's court, and meetings of the council and at the Cockpit loomed larger in his calendar *The Political Journal of George Bubb Dodington*, John Carswell and Lewis Arnold Dralle eds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

<sup>126</sup> Jupp, *Governing*, 90.

<sup>127</sup> Brewer, *Party*, 150.

<sup>128</sup> The Crown and Anchor tavern, for example, was used both by the parliamentary Whigs for assemblies and by radicals for political debates. Parolin, *Radical Spaces*, 114.

<sup>129</sup> Lord Shelburne was a sponsor of Enlightenment philosophers. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *Life of William Earl of Shelburne* (1875).

reporting of debates as an assault on parliamentary privilege and no note taking was allowed in the Commons galleries until 1783 (and even then access was only gradually conceded).<sup>130</sup> The old guard considered press management ‘dirty work’, but many were not so fastidious employing press agents to control coverage.<sup>131</sup> Charles James Fox engaged the Irish playwright Denis O’Byrne to place articles in the newspaper for him – praising his actions and needling his enemies.<sup>132</sup> Only a senator of Roman stoicism could be indifferent to press criticism. Canning sent his mother the best newspaper report of his maiden speech and preened when he was the target of satirical attack. ‘I would rather be abused a little... than have nothing at all said about me.’ Canning even solicited the cartoonist James Gillray to publish a satirical caricature of him, hoping to see it hanging in Hannah Humphrey’s print shop window on St James’s Street – the main thoroughfare from clubs to court and on to parliament.<sup>133</sup>

Despite the concentration of political power within London during the season, and the compact and insular looking nature of the political campus examined here, constituency business and mercantile and manufacturing interests were given due political weight. The landed were deeply invested in mining and transport ventures themselves, while younger sons of gentry were often apprenticed to the genteel trades. The great landowners recognized their obligations to manufacturers in their shires. The county, not London, was the natural arena for consultation. It was the Marquess of Rockingham’s role as Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding that made him an advocate for the complaints of Halifax and Bradford merchants in 1769.<sup>134</sup> Landowners were accustomed to hearing the grievances of tenants, while MPs and their families had to charm the merchants, manufacturers, shopkeepers, mayor and aldermen of their constituencies.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, provincial interests often had a London outpost; there were numerous Scottish, Welsh and county associations, charities and dinners which might host the local MP and air

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<sup>130</sup> David Lemmings *Law and Government in England during the long Eighteenth Century: From Consent to Command* (London, 2011), 165–66.

<sup>131</sup> Jupp, *Governing*, 198; I Asquith, ‘The Whig party and the Press in the early nineteenth century’, *Historical Review*, vol 49 (1976), 264–83. See 277 for the quotation.

<sup>132</sup> David O’Shaughnessy, ‘Making a Play for Patronage: Dennis O’Byrne’s A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed (1783)’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol 39, no 1 (January 2015), 183–211.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Godfrey and Mark Hallett (eds.), *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature* (London, 2001), 17; Draper Hill *Mr Gillray the Caricaturist* (New York, 1965), 56–58.

<sup>134</sup> John Styles, ‘“Our Traitorous Money Makers”: the Yorkshire Coiners and the Law, 1760–1783,’ in John Brewer and John Styles, *An Ungovernable People. The English and their Law in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Centuries* (London, 1980), 222.

<sup>135</sup> Elaine Chalus, ‘That Epidemical Madness: Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century’ in Elaine Chalus and Hannah Barker, eds, *Gender in Eighteenth Century England* (London and New York: Longman, 1999)

grievances.<sup>136</sup> Parliament's responsiveness to economic lobbies like the West Indian Merchants has been demonstrated via the enormous number of commercial bills that came before the house. There was an incessant traffic of witnesses speaking to parliamentary committees set up in response to local petitions.<sup>137</sup> Boulton lobbied MPs in their seasonal homes. Political wives visited in the City in quest of support.<sup>138</sup> Cross-town traffic between West End and the City deserves a study of its own.

Nor was it possible to ignore plebeian views even in the well-paved, well-lit West End. The constituency of Westminster was a scot and lot borough, wherein all ratepayers including many artisans had the vote.<sup>139</sup> Opinions were forced on the powerful by various means. In July 1756, Sydney Townsend sent 'the Ballad of the Day' on to his father the Viscount 'which last night was thrown down the area of several houses' on Old Bond Street.<sup>140</sup> After the Duke of Bedford opposed a bill imposing high duties on Italian silks in 1765, a mob of Spitalfields' weavers attacked Bedford House. Lady Mary Coke was beset in her sedan during the Middlesex election of 1768 for appearing to be anti-Wilkes.<sup>141</sup> In February 1784, Pitt was assailed in his carriage by a Foxite 'body of Chairmen armed with bludgeons' outside Brooks's club and had to take refuge in White's opposite.<sup>142</sup> The Gordon Riots triggered arson across London and the deployment of troops in Mayfair. Indeed one of the benefits of the parliamentary site was believed to be access to the river, affording politicians a speedy escape by boat should the house be mobbed. At the same time, however, the dispersed nature of the political map and the predictability of political routines made political lives public – politicians could be cornered on a street or in their carriage. One of the most striking features of a recovered political day is the combination of elements both ancient and novel. These elements abide today in different textbooks, but they were interwoven for the governing ranks as they manoeuvred across the newly plural political landscape.

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The political day that has been reconstructed here is built around the routines of men who had

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<sup>136</sup> White, *London*, 18-121.

<sup>137</sup> Hoppit, *Legislation*, Hoppit, *Economies*.

<sup>138</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 88.

<sup>139</sup> [http://www.penelopejcorfield.co.uk/PDF%27s/CorfieldPdf30\\_London-Electoral-History-website.pdf](http://www.penelopejcorfield.co.uk/PDF%27s/CorfieldPdf30_London-Electoral-History-website.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> HL, 11 TD 1915, 26 July 1756, Sydney Thomas Townsend Viscount to Thomas Townshend.

<sup>141</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 90, 98, 99.

<sup>142</sup> Hague, *Pitt the Younger*, 165-66.

seats in the Houses of Commons and Lords, but this is not to glorify the mother of all parliaments. No successful politician could hold himself aloof from visits, levées, court, club, soirees and social season. Anyone trying to secure passage of private bill, for instance, needed a quorum of support to prevent bill being thrown out and to drive it through. That quorum typically had to be built one MP at a time. Parliamentary attendance was not enough given that parliament was but one element in a larger whole. Recent work on the government of the East and West Indies, suggests this hybrid political ecology was even transplanted to imperial outposts as the trading companies ceded sovereignty to the crown. Colonial governors replicated court etiquette in the tropics, held levées modelled on St James and Dublin Castle, and considered their professional and personal lives coterminous.<sup>143</sup>

In recreating male levées, morning visiting and discontinuous political conversation at social events, this article has focused attention on the similarities between male and female socio-political behaviour. This is not to deny the fact that turning the tide of opinion by the force of rhetoric on the floor of the house, and voting on legislation and affairs of state were solely masculine privileges. During the ladies' invasion of the Lords in 1739, Mrs Pendarves reported to her sister 'My Lord Chesterfield spoke most exquisitely well -... Everything after him was dull and heavy; much *circumfloribus* stuff was talked of on the Court side.' Still despite the tedium and waffle, 'I think that was the first time I wished to be a man - though nothing less than a peer.'<sup>144</sup> Nonetheless, male business at Westminster should not be romanticized or examined in isolation of the broader political day, its map and interconnected socio-political activities; waking up from a nap to vote on local turnpikes or dropping in to the house after dinner to participate in a division was but one element in a far broader system of persuasion and patronage, opinion and principles. In fact, in recreating daily routines and the organisation of time and space it is striking how *little* time men actually spent in Parliament. Whilst an exceptional debate might keep a politician in the chamber for hours and even overnight, popping in and out for a brief visit appears more the norm - just one short component of the long and varied political day.

Reconstructing the quotidian details of the political day and the interrelationship of its constituent parts dissolves the implied contrast in much political history between 'real politics'

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<sup>143</sup> Ashley Cohen, "The 'Aristocratic Imperialists' of Late Georgian and Regency Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 50.1 (Fall 2016), 5-26.

<sup>144</sup> *Delany*, vol 2, 42-45.

and female social froth. The female dominated club ‘Almacks was no cock pit of power’, argues Peter Mandler ‘but rather a theatre in which was played out a sophisticated melodrama of powerlessness’.<sup>145</sup> But were not male levées also pompous theatres of association, favour and disfavour? Important male politics and trivial female visiting do not seem so different to us as we have been led to believe. However, our intention is broader than the important project of female recuperation. Instead of demonstrating how far female political actors resembled men, it has proved more helpful to reflect on the ways male practice resembled that of their womenfolk. Voting on legislation was simply the hallmarking of decisions which were forged elsewhere, at homosocial gatherings, and in the mixed sex venues of court, town house and fashionable commercial entertainment. Peers and MPs may have loved the echo of their own oratory in the chamber, but the geography and diary of politics create a different story.

The political day recreated here is distinctive to the long eighteenth century. The early nineteenth-century professionalization of politics was seen to drive a wedge between politics and high society. Ladies especially were seen as losers when the politics of ‘drawing rooms and cabinets’ gave way to bureaucratic surveillance.<sup>146</sup> However it is also possible to draw a broader conclusion that between 1688 and 1834 the political system was remarkably porous; its principle venues – court, parliament, town house, coffee house, opera and theatre, not to mention the pavements of Westminster - permeable to outsiders whether female or commercial, foreign diplomat or concerned constituent. Analysing political behaviour through the lens of space and time exposes the weak border between ‘high politics’ and the interests and opinions of the unrepresented, a permeability which gave the regime its flexibility and its strength.

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<sup>145</sup> Mandler, ‘Almack’s’, 160.

<sup>146</sup> Lewis *Patriotism*, 95.