

## Editorial

In this issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, we explore the different ways in which time was culturally constructed in the early modern period. How was time experienced, conceptualized and organized? What were the temporal practices that structured early modern lives, either individually or collectively? How did one measure time and acknowledge its effects on people, and what were the cultural imaginaries, sensory settings or discursive frames through which time became lived reality? Time could be experienced as an embodied aspect of human existence, but was also represented and mediated in various ways. In this journal issue, we are looking for the ways in which people managed and conceptualized both time and temporality and incorporated them into their understanding of the specific cultural context(s) in which they lived.

The idea that time is culturally constructed has its own history, of course, and so has the interest in exploring its development. Peter Burke has traced these developments and suggests that the most significant turning point may have occurred around 1900, with the social theory of Émile Durkheim and his circle, later followed by the *Annales* historians.

The basic binary opposition underlying these studies was the one between self and other, presented as a contrast between traditional and modern, between what Febvre called *le temps vécu* and *le temps-mesuré*. Time in traditional societies, according to the model used by these scholars, is qualitative, concrete, local, imprecise, or in a word, organic. Time in modern societies, on the other hand, is quantitative, abstract, uniform, and exact, as mechanical as the clocks and watches used to measure it ... Traditional time is the time of experience, organized and measured by tasks, especially agricultural tasks ... Modern time, by contrast, according to these scholars, was exact time, measured by the clock, a sense of time appropriate to commercial and industrial societies, with a different work rhythm from pastoral or agricultural communities. (2004, 619-620)

Burke comments on this opposition being in need of qualification, by noticing both the reciprocal implications between the two sorts of time, and an increasing awareness of the multiplicity of forms of time reckoning that can already be recorded in the experience of early modern people (see also Gurvitch 1963). We hope that the present collection of essays can bring more food for thought in the same direction. If the powerful turn from organic and task-oriented time towards measured and mechanical time took place in the early modern period, we need to think about how these changes were understood by the early modern people themselves. In order to do this,



we provide case studies from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, discussing in different ways how the two views of time were in fact intertwined with one another, and indeed with various everyday practices that allowed early modern people to develop both complex and personal understanding and experience of temporality.

Anthropological research on the cultural relativity of time experiences has exercised a major influence on the most recent generation of historical studies, and displayed a characteristic attention for the way objects shape temporality (Birth 2012). Consequently, the growing field of material culture studies represents the framework within which a significant amount of work on temporality has found and is likely to find place and encouragement in the foreseeable future (Appadurai 1986; Harvey 2009; Gerritsen and Riello 2015). Linked with an interest in the material culture of time is its close connection with technology: time has been both measured and understood by means of various technological tools, the innovation of which has also introduced changes in experiencing time. Whether portable watches or pendulum clocks, early modern innovations in the technology of time marked a modernisation process that gave rise to temporal management as an ever more powerful vehicle of control and discipline.

But the early modern period also saw new vocabularies develop for discussing experiences related to time, bringing with them new forms of affect. For some people, time was secularized, but for others, it grew even more intensely religious, demanding an enhanced personal investment in temporal management. Time was also gendered, particularly if we look at it from the perspective of everyday life.

There is also, inevitably and intriguingly, a reflexive, meta-historical dimension in any consideration of time: history as a discipline is practised in a given time set, and applies to culturally specific past time frames and flows (on periodization within a pragmatic reflection on doing history, see Jordanova 2006, 105-125). No wonder then that historians, like literary scholars and anthropologists, have increasingly seized upon time as a subject that is not only constitutive of historical subjectivities but also a foundational ingredient of the disciplines themselves (Hunt 2008, 16-24).

*JEMS* is, programmatically, an interdisciplinary humanities journal. It is therefore noteworthy, and yet entirely in line with the publication agenda, that Donatella Pallotti and Paola Pugliatti have kindly invited two cultural historians to guest edit this year's issue. We accepted their invitation with enthusiasm. The International Society for Cultural History (ISCH – incidentally, the environment within which the two of us met, began and have continued to collaborate) had chosen for its 2015 yearly conference, which was held in Bucharest, the topic of 'Time and Culture'. It was a natural choice, therefore, for us, to invite some of the conference speakers, who both for the chronology and methodology of their research were consistent with the

horizon of our interests, to develop their conference papers into contributions for the present volume.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, five of the articles that follow (Ashcroft, Bourdon, Kaartinen, Korhonen, and Ylivuori) are the result of a re-elaboration of texts first presented before audiences in Bucharest. Another (Eriksen) had been planned for the conference but could not be delivered, because in the end the panel for which it had been intended did not materialize. Cope's article has been written especially for this journal issue. Arcangeli's was first delivered as a plenary lecture at the 2016 yearly conference of the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies (IASEMS), which was held in Catania. As is always the case, feedback from their respective audiences, as well as from the anonymous referees who generously volunteered to review the present collection, greatly helped the texts to reach the form in which they are now offered to the reader.

Given that cultural history intrinsically eschews definition and standardization, it will not come as a surprise if the contents of the present issue present the reader with a variety of research objects and approaches.

Material culture, and the way in which the design, manufacturing and uses of objects expressed and channelled time experiences and perceptions, a dimension which we have reviewed among the most characteristic and promising recent developments of research in the field, is represented in Sophie Cope's essay. The 'things' whose social life she investigates are gifts exchanged on the occasion of the New Year in early modern England – dated objects that may both reflect and have encouraged the perception of that cyclical moment as significant in people's lives, and represent a symbolically charged material component of the shared celebration of the ritual year.

History writing (therefore, in a sense, fragments towards a history of historiography) is the object of two distinct analyses, which differ for the chronology, geography and genre of the texts examined. In the first, Étienne Bourdon explores a variety of genres of Renaissance history writing in order to investigate the multiplicity of temporal conceptions which they express. While some continuity of the Christian reading of time as a divine order is clearly perceivable, historical narratives testify to a relative secularization of time, witnessing the emergence of the notion of heritage and an increasing focus on the present. In the other essay, Anne Eriksen proposes a close cross-examination of two textbook collections of historical *exempla* from early modern Scandinavia. The principle of *historia* as *magistra vitae* is still dominating to such an extent that the narratives are not ordered chronologically, but rather in the form of a lexicon of virtues that the pupils are expected to learn from the knowledge of the past.

<sup>1</sup> A wider selection of papers from the same conference is going to be published in Lung *et al.*

Other forms of cultural practice are the focus of the remaining contributions. Anu Korhonen challenges the received idea that early modern time keeping was vague and primarily task-oriented, in particular among women, and finds a variety of contexts and ways in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English women already adopted clock-time as a matter of fact, both in their experience and conceptualizing, albeit (still) mixing it with the circadian rhythm and an understanding of task-oriented temporality.

Time management is at stake in Soile Ylivuori's contribution. With focus on an individual and her ego documents, we are here invited to appreciate the highly specific context in which an eighteenth-century Englishwoman, whose life circle was strictly dependent on the Archbishop of Canterbury, adopted a painstakingly accurate monitoring of her own daily activity. This consisted of an exercise of self-discipline which, however, the author does not imagine as devoid of autonomous agency and self-satisfaction.

With Marjo Kaartinen we explore *ennui* – therefore also making a contribution to the growing field of study of the affective life of past generations. By means of a systematic search of the available literature via a digital resource, the author revisits the precise timing and contexts of the English borrowing of the French word, and finds a strong correlation of its usage with social rank and lifestyles, while a surprisingly limited role seems to be played in the story by gender.

Rachel Ashcroft analyses the writings of Giordano Bruno and Michel de Montaigne from the perspective of their understanding of time, as a complex dimension in which the human mind and body interplay, and finds a significant correspondence between their two approaches.

Finally, reading is the cultural practice considered by Alessandro Arcangeli from two different, complementary perspectives: the time conditions in which the act of reading was practiced in a period of the early modern era affected by the introduction of the printing press and much else, but also the time experience readers may have had while absorbed in their texts, according to genre and other conditions.

As this brief summary may already suggest, some of the themes and dimensions of the historical analysis of temporality as cultural history has developed it can be seen applied in practice in the eight contributions, which could also be read transversally as exemplifying fields, in which given research categories and tools can be fruitfully adopted. Gender is central in Korhonen and Ylivuori, while also being considered by Arcangeli and Kaartinen; class or social hierarchy are meaningful in Cope, Eriksen, Korhonen and Ylivuori. Emotions are relevant for Ashcroft, Eriksen, Kaartinen and Korhonen. Korhonen and Ylivuori share as well an emphasis on clocks and clock-time, duration, time-keeping and time management. Temporality figures among the concepts used and areas explored by Bourdon, Eriksen, Kaartinen and Korhonen. Arcangeli and Bourdon speak, to various extents, of historicity;

Arcangeli, Bourdon and Korhonen, also, of rhythms. Calendars are discussed by Ashcroft, Bourdon and Cope; and chronology by Bourdon and Eriksen.

Undoubtedly, the topic we have chosen would allow many more enquiries, and there was no attempt, in assembling the present collection, to be systematic in any respect. Nevertheless, we hope that we are offering to the reader interesting enough topics and approaches; as well, perhaps, as some encouragement to pursue further investigation of still uncharted territories.

Alessandro Arcangeli and Anu Korhonen

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