Kristen Poole and Owen Williams, eds. *Early Modern Histories of Time: The Periodizations of Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century England*. **Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2019. 376 pp. ISBN 9780812251524. $84.95 hardback.**

This fascinating and thought-provoking collection represents a significant intervention into how we conceptualize periodization. Considering on the one hand how scholars work within historical periods and on the other hand how people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries conceived of time, *Early Modern Histories of Time* radically questions how we organize history and the assumptions that we make when applying temporal divisions to the past.

A key issue for the editors and contributors concerns "how temporal models that are indigenous to the early modern period might inform our own intellectual habits of conceptualizing time and history" (1). The editors in the superb introduction point out that the people subjected to academic inquiry frequently think of time in ways that do not correspond to our own modes of periodization. They ask "[h]ow do current models of the past encounter, accommodate and account for the models of history prevalent *within* the period being studied? How might conceptual models *from* the past shape or subvert models *of* the past? And how can these models (those from the past, those from the present) enter into a productive intellectual dialectic?" (3-4). This gives rise to a number of chapters exploring diverse local habits of time and

chronology, from "laundry time" and the effect of marriage demographics on love lyric to biblical typology. They note that in thinking about the diverse timescapes inhabited by people in the past, the volume "retraces the path of humanists" (4) who both appropriated and resisted inherited modes of knowledge formation.

Throughout, the editors and contributors acknowledge the necessary fiction that is periodization, and how it offers a response to the practical need for chronological divisions and a language of period even if it is good for nothing other than the organizing of research and teaching; however, it is made abundantly clear that it *is* a fiction and that there are always different ways of telling stories about how we conceptualize the past. This is a wonderfully freeing experience for the reader, who is duly invited to think playfully about what are often accepted truths about periods of study. This freedom necessarily has caveats, not least when it comes to the risks of intellectual knowledge being spread too thinly over an expansive period, or becoming too narrow in focus. Nonetheless, there is an expansive and generous sense of the rich possibilities that such an approach to time may afford scholars of the past.

In their introduction, editors Kristen Poole and Owen Williams outline the scope and rationale for the collection, paying particular attention to the need to bridge the gap between scholars working on the "politics of periodization and those interested in the historical epistemology of time" (4). Emphasizing the current reassessment of period boundaries and how scholars construct historical time, as well as the diversity of approaches to the measuring and experience of time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they state that the volume will problematize common modes of periodization. In resisting any urge to make definitive assertions about temporalities, the chapters are, they say, a "series of explorations and thought experiments" (12).

The volume is organized into six parts beginning with an overview of "Periodization in Historiography and Literary Studies." Here, Tim Harris writes from the point of view of an historian, and Nigel Smith from the perspectives of a literary scholar. In "Periodizing the Early Modern: The Historian's View," Harris stresses that historians must impose interpretative frameworks on the past but that these frameworks have to be subjected to continual reappraisal. Harris explores the periodization of the early modern and how it is used by historians, highlighting the variety of approaches as well as excavating the history of periodization itself, and noting that the idea that history could be periodized in fact emerged in the era we now describe as "early modern". Harris argues that historians "study problems rather than

periods," (23) reframing temporal contexts as being determined by the nature of the intellectual inquiry which is at stake. He ends with a discussion of the challenges facing periodicity in the academy, pointing out that a greater engagement with other disciplines will enrich the study of history and inform greater reflection on the labels employed by historians. For Harris, the "fuzziness" (34) and inherent plurality of the category "early modern" is ultimately a virtue.

In "Time Boundaries and Time Shifts in Early Modern Literary Studies," Nigel Smith begins with the current "flux" (36) in approaches to periodization. He focuses on international and trans-national English literature; the interrogation of time in literary sources; and the role of New Formalism in pushing a rethink in how periodization is conceptualized. Harris begins with the etymology of the word 'period', uncovering a number of paradoxes at the term's heart and highlighting its relationship with figuration: "Periods are time shapes" (38) he observes. Highlighting the increasingly "expansive and elastic" sense of time that is informing current historical and literary criticism, Smith ends by conjecturing that literary studies, with its attention to close reading as a multi-temporal practice, may serve as "a springboard for a revolution in the understanding of time not only in our own discipline but also in others" (51).

The first thematic part of the volume is focused on religion. In "How Early Modern Church Historians Defined Periods in History" Euan Cameron highlights how much early historiography was concerned with finding order in chaos: "a search for the hand of God" (57). Outlining the three systems which dominated biblical history writing in early modernity, Cameron looks at their similarities and differences and outlines how early modern historians looked for patterns, finding in the past "their own reflections" (71) as well as traces of the divine. In "Periodization and the Secular" Ethan Shagan recovers the early meaning of secular as a historical period in itself by listening to what our subjects have to tell us about how history should be organized. Observing that Christian theology imagined the world as always, already, secular, a "predicament in which it is embedded," (86) Shagan contends that periodizing the secular is not about charting a rising secularism but tracking the shifting relationship between religion's contrary impulses towards being within and being separate from the world. For Shagan, one defining event of the *saeculum* is the English Reformation's placing of Christianity firmly in the world: a position that would shift again in the seventeenth century as the failure of the English Revolution bought about

a withdrawal into internal belief. James Simpson's chapter, "Trans-Reformation English Literary History," argues for the importance of ecclesiological revolutions as epoch making events. Within this frame he asks why the decades prior to the Reformation of 1517 have been largely ignored by literary historians and why the Reformation itself has not been analyzed through the lens of literary history and criticism. After isolating reasons for these omissions and addressing how they can be rectified, he proceeds to argue for the importance of ecclesiology—the study of the church and its theological identity—in how we reshape periodization in the future.

Part two concerns materiality. The opening chapter by Kate Giles, "Time and Place in Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon," harnesses archaeology's stratigraphic methodology, and the material palimpsest that it reveals, in order to argue for the power of accretive temporalities. Giles focuses on a complex of medieval guild buildings in Stratford-upon-Avon in order to explore the way a building's archaeology can reveal the material legacy of the past and how this can be brought to bear on people's conception of the present and future. For Giles, layered material temporalities are not only a methodological practice, but also part of the lived experience of such buildings. In "Much Ado About Ruffs: Laundry Time in Feminist Counter-Archives" Natasha Korda proposes that ruffs offer a material temporality that re-frames ideas of chronology and period. Highlighting their fragility and the rhythm of the labor involved in their laundering, she posits that the ruff symbolizes "ephemeral, everyday time, which is to say the temporality of recurrence" (128). In so doing, she foregrounds cyclical rather than linear time and periodicity rather than period. Korda links the temporality of the ruff, and the labor of the laundry time that care of such fashionable items demanded, to the recovering of a history of the everyday encoded in laundry lists. Emphasizing how archival work was often gendered as "female drudgery," (136) she stresses how attending to the counter-archive (a charge historically led by female archivists) can offer us a glimpse into temporalities of recurrence.

Part three attends to poetics. Gordon Teskey in "The Period Concept and Seventeenth-Century Poetry" argues that poetry has no definitive end point but rather "gets louder with time," (147) recurring eerily through allusion and influence. Teskey also notes how period is a cultural as well as historical concept and deeply entangled with notions of style: its effects can result in what he calls a "bubble in time," (152) a spherical container in which resonances combine. To demonstrate the effects of this, he analyzes a series of stylistic tropes, and the spheres that they represent, through

readings of poems spanning the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Julianne Werlin in "Love Poetry and Periodization" then considers how the life span offers a persistent unit of measurement. She makes links between shifting demographic trends in relation to marriage and the composition of love lyric, arguing that specific patterns of marriage influenced the Petrarchan love lyric. As these altered so too did the nature of love poetry. In attending to changing attitudes to the life cycle, Werlin argues, we can find "a point of contact between the smaller arcs of private experience and the wider trajectories of social change" (163).

Part four focuses on the writing of William Shakespeare. In "Shakespeare, Period" Douglas Bruster interrogates how Shakespeare has become a shorthand for the past. In the process he notes that Shakespeare's own work is persistently haunted by the past, returning time and again to the idea of the writer as resurrectionist. Bruster also dedicates space to analyzing the effect of Shakespeare's dominance on popular culture and teaching, considering how the bard has come to stand in for other writers and styles, flattening the diversity and complexity of literary history in the process. This is a problem he sees as being exacerbated by the digital age. Julia Reinhard Lupton in "Periodic Shakespeare" considers how Shakespeare's work recurs at intervals and is itself in conversation with multiple different pasts. She asks: "What kind of orienting skills and capacities does Periodic Shakespeare build, such as hope, courage, judgement, care, hospitality, resilience, trust, and respect?" (201) An analysis of these virtues through the lens of *The Winter's Tale* ends with a call to scholarship to reach beyond historicizing to embrace a "broader appreciation of Shakespeare's virtues as the plays pulse across epochs and media" (212).

Part five focuses on self-emplacement. In "John Dryden and Restoration Time: Writing the Self Within Time, Through Time, beyond Time," Steven N. Zwicker interrogates the "age of Dryden" and how any "age" denies the possibility that literary time can be experienced as a "continuous arc" (215). Zwicker asks how Dryden figured time and proceeds to chart a shift in how he conceptualized time, from locating himself conspicuously within time at the beginning of his career to stepping "out of time" (226) as he aged. Zwicker posits that a more nuanced sense of a literary age may be afforded by considering "what it felt like to live within the flow of its time" (229). In "Did the English Seventeenth Century Really End at 1660: Subaltern Perspectives on the Continuing Impact of the English Civil Wars," Mihoko Suzuki argues that a turn towards popular literature and the writings of women can help us reassess the

Restoration as a period marker. Suzuki contends that subaltern sources suggestively position the Civil War as an event that continued to resonate well beyond 1660. Probing this blind spot, the chapter argues for the unity of the seventeenth century, providing evidence for continuities across the century from non-elite writers such as the religious writer and diarist Anne Halkett.

Part six goes beyond time. In "Space Travel: Spatiality and/or Temporality in the Study of Periodization," Heather Dubrow makes a case for periodization involving "not only temporality but also spatiality" (251). Highlighting how historical shifts take different forms in different regions and how control of space via systems of inclusion and exclusion chime with debates about periodization, Dubrow argues that spatiality informed people's conception of time and epoch. Kristen Poole in "Always, Already, Again: Toward a New Typological History" provides a nuanced history of biblical typology as an origami-like process whereby "separate moments in the text and in time have contact, and thus theological meaning, through intricate and intentional patterned foldings" (269). Poole focuses on typological time through the lens of Origen's *Hexapla* and the mode of reading it inspired in the seventeenth century, particularly as disseminated via the popular Hexaplae composed by Andrew Willet (1562-1621). Poole's analysis spans Origen's third-century collation of Hebrew scripture, novelistic foreshadowing, and the use of flashback in film to shape a trans-period typological history.

Intellectually curious and playful, *Early Modern Histories of Time* is a must-read for all scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Taken together its wide-ranging and diverse approaches to periodization represent no less than a radical reframing of how we conceptualize the past. It will likely prove to be of particular importance for how concepts of period and chronology are harnessed, and questioned, in the classroom. As with the best inquiring work, this book will leave further conversations and debates in its wake.

Abigail Shinn
Goldsmiths, University of London