

‘the several hours of the day had variety of  
employments assigned to them’:  
Women’s Timekeeping in Early Modern England

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*Abstract*

The article examines early modern Englishwomen’s notions and experiences of time in their daily lives. In contrast to what has been assumed, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women’s everyday life often involved standard use of clock-time. Women’s activities tended to form habitual schedules that contributed to their experience of temporal order, and increasingly demanded accurate measurement of duration, often overlooked in deliberations of early modern temporal organisation. In more recent discussions, women emerge as both time-aware and time-literate, conceptualising their activities through temporal measurements and metaphors where mechanical time and the circadian rhythm were intertwined with an episodic understanding of task-oriented temporality. Women’s experience of time was governed by practical social and economic constraints, practices and tasks dictated by patriarchal gender divisions, and their quest for Christian salvation.

*Keywords:* Clock-time, Gender, Time, Timekeeping, Women

1. *Introduction*

In research on early modern conceptions of time, it has traditionally been suggested that everyday time awareness was tied to cyclical rhythms of nature until the invention, in the late seventeenth century, of accurate pendulum clocks and watches with spiral springs. Even then, both these items were expensive luxury objects, out of reach of most ordinary people. A ‘horological revolution’, a profound change in people’s awareness of time, would only be completed during the industrial revolution, with its enhanced demands of time-discipline. Furthermore, women have been especially closely associated with natural rhythms and cyclical conceptions of time, because of their bodily peculiarities, the nature of their work and status in society, and their relationship to costly technology. Recently, however, these



notions – particularly the timing and pace of change in time awareness – have been forcefully contested (Dohrn-van Rossum 1996; Glennie and Thrift 2009; Engammare 2010; Blondé and Verhoeven 2013). In this essay, I will continue the work of the latter camp and focus especially on the somewhat neglected subject of women's sense of time: sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishwomen were, in fact, much more aware of time, including clock-time, than has been assumed. They often discussed their own use and management of time and were loath to waste any of it on unworthy tasks. Their days were often characterised by clock-timed activities, which formed habitual schedules as responses to the demands of status, employment, and beliefs. Women's activities also seem to have demanded increasingly accurate measurement of duration, often overlooked in discussions of early modern temporal organisation.

In what follows, I will investigate the practices and conceptions that shaped early modern Englishwomen's use and understanding of time in their everyday lives, focusing especially on the century between the 1550s and 1650s. Looking at material produced by women and for women, I will show that women's use of time was governed by very practical social and economic constraints, by practices and tasks dictated by patriarchal gender divisions and by their quest for Christian salvation. Time was essential for early modern women, and it was understood in several different ways, all indicating that their understanding and experience of temporality was complex and detailed.

Amy Boesky (2000) has argued that men and women 'were understood to occupy, to record and to experience time' in different ways. In Boesky's discussion, focusing mainly on the question of ageing, many of these ways were linked to female bodies, characterised as they were by menstruation and much quicker ageing than men's bodies. In Christian thinking, as Boesky points out, the whole fact of human mortality was brought about by the actions of a woman, Eve, and thus the effects of mortal time could be at least partly blamed on women (132-136; see also Jacquart and Thomasset 1985, 6; Yandell 2000, 23). While these conceptions undoubtedly shaped early modern experiences of time, I would like to position my discussion differently. Temporality also permeated the rhythms of quotidian practice. After first discussing how women made use of clock-time in their daily activities and schedules, I will think about the temporal implications of the moral condemnation of idleness and finish with a look at how questions of time converged in women's intellectual pursuits.

## *2. Women and Clock-Time*

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most women, or indeed their family members, would not have owned clocks and watches. In Lorna Weatherill's sample of English probate inventories of the late seventeenth

and early eighteenth centuries, a somewhat later period than mine, only 16% of (the mostly middle-class) women seem to have owned clocks, while a somewhat higher 20% of men were recorded as owning them. Fewer women than men owned clocks, then, and for both sexes, the percentage must have been significantly lower in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries (1988, 139).<sup>1</sup> According to Moira Donald's estimate, based on early modern wills, only about 10% of seventeenth-century men and 5% of women owned timepieces at the time of their death (2000, 66).

Despite this, women mentioned time or duration quite often and in much detail, and sometimes in surprising connections. For example, Anne Askew, arrested for heresy and interrogated and tortured in the Tower of London in 1546, stated with certainty that she 'sate ij. longe houres reasonynge with my lorde Chauncellour vpon the bare floore' (1996, f. 47r). About a hundred years later, in the summer of 1653, Dorothy Osborne described her life in a letter to her fiancé using very specific clock-times: she spent time in the garden until it grew too hot at ten o'clock in the morning, and she went out again for a walk at about six o'clock (1928, 51-52).

In personal records such as diaries and memoirs, we first see standard use of clock-times in accounts of exceptional events, such as natural disasters – earthquakes, for instance, were recorded as happening at specific times of the clock even in the early sixteenth century. Many diarists of the early modern era recorded exact times of their children's births, often also for the purposes of astrological prediction. Illnesses and deaths of loved ones could also be meticulously documented, marking their personal and emotional significance. Gradually, as the seventeenth century progressed, recording even the mundane events of one's own life according to clock-time became ever more frequent.<sup>2</sup>

To have a closer look, we can consider Lady Margaret Hoby's diary of 1599-1605, where many entries on daily activities, particularly at the start of the diary, refer to clock-time. On Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> of August in 1599, for example, she recorded all her tasks by the hour:

<sup>1</sup> Moira Donald rightly points out that Weatherill's selection of artefacts did not include watches, which necessarily makes it difficult to generalise about time awareness on the basis of these figures. Her own evidence shows that watches were more popular than clocks in the seventeenth century, although still relatively rare (2000, 60-61).

<sup>2</sup> For births, illnesses and deaths, see for instance Fanshawe 1829, 122; D'Ewes 1845, II, 44-45, 146-147; Kingsford 1934, II, 193; Twysden 1939, 117; Wigglesworth 1946, 96; Anthony Ashley Cooper in Houlbrooke 1988, 69; Archer 1994, 120, 125-126, 139. For events related to everyday life, see for instance Fanshawe 1829, 84-86 recording a time at night when she saw a ghost; Heywood 1882, I, 340 recording sleeplessness between midnight and 2 o'clock; Knyvett 1949, 90-93 recording arrival time on a journey.

After I was readie I praied priuately: then I walked with Mr Hoby tell 8: a clock, at which time I brake my fast, and so to worke, and, at 11: of the Clock, I took a Lector of Mr Rhodes, and went to dinner: after dinner I wound yearn tell: 3, and then walked with Mr Hoby about the toune to spye out the best places where Cotiges might be builded: after I came home I wrought tell: 6: and gaue order for supper, and then I betook me to priuat praier and examination, in which I found my selfe a lacking for pardon: then went to supper, after which I walked a whill. (1998, 8)

In the evening, Lady Hoby again prayed, helped her husband to look at some papers, and then went to bed, but did not record exact times for her undertakings. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, again, clock-times emerge to regulate the progression of her day:

In the morning, after priuat praier, I Reed of the bible, and then wrought tell 8: a clock, and then I eate my breakfast: after which done, I walked in the feeldes tell: 10 a clock, then I praied, and, not long after, I went to dinner: and about one a clock I geathered my Apeles tell: 4:, then I Cam home, and wrought tell almost: 6:, and then I went to priuat praier and examination, in which it pleased the lord to blesse me. (11)

Margaret Hoby was, of course, in many ways a special case. Contemporary Englishwomen did not typically write diaries, and her tasks reveal her elite position – even if needlework and gathering of apples were common activities for women lower down on the social scale too. Nevertheless, her insistence on clock-time is striking. Most of her activities were organised by reference to either clock-times or meals, which also functioned as temporal signals subdividing the diurnal pattern. Clock-times emerge especially frequently in between mealtimes to position periods of household or textile work, physical activity, intellectual pursuits or religious contemplation.

Towards the autumn, however, Margaret Hoby's markings of clock-time grow much rarer, and the entries themselves gradually become less detailed. Morning and evening hours – usually 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning and 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening – are still sometimes mentioned, but very irregularly, and daily tasks appear as a steady progression rather than as periods pinned down with external reference to clock-time. Every now and then, a day with several clock-times emerges, such as the next 4<sup>th</sup> of February (79). Her sustained attention to clock-time does not resume the following summer – the frequency of the 1599 markings does not seem to be sparked by easy availability of sundial readings in fair weather. Perhaps there was a new clock in the Hoby household at that time, or she was just more attentive to detail, time included, when first starting her diary.

Lady Anne Clifford begins her diary, in turn, by recording the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, noting that she passed away at 2.30 at night while at about 10 the next morning James was proclaimed king (1990, 21). Clock-times are mentioned from the very start, then, but in the traditional context of

important events. Later in the diary, clock-times are entered infrequently, but with a clear sense of their usefulness. For instance, when Clifford reluctantly parted with her daughter Margaret, she mentions 'the Child' leaving for London 'between 11 and 12' (34). Her own and her husband's travel and arrival times elicit precise clock-time markings, sometimes coinciding with disagreements with her husband. Such was the case on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1616, when she was abruptly sent from London to their country home at Knole:

Then my Lord told me I should go presently to Knole, & so I was sent away upon half an hour's warning, leaving my Coz. Cecily Neville & Willoughby behind me in London, & so went down alone with Kath. Buxton about 8 a clock at night, so as it was 12 before we came to Knole. (39)

Anne Clifford's use of clock-time often seems to be linked with a need to coordinate with others: when travel arrangements or momentous events, such as her mother's death, demand precise organisation from several people, her diary entries, too, display more temporal detail. Furthermore, emotional incidents, such as illness of a child, provoke her to mark down exact timings (41, 49). It is also notable that Anne Clifford's clock-time markings are not restricted to one place – in fact, they are often related precisely to a change of location.

Hoby and Clifford are examples of a much wider pattern of emerging prevalence of mechanical time. If clocks and watches were rare, how are we to explain this widespread use of clock-time in early modern source material? Scholars of temporal practices have recently shown that in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, clock-time was mostly judged not on the basis of privately owned clocks but public ones. In England, many churches had been equipped with a wall clock already in the fifteenth century, and the ringing of bells made hours audible even to those who had no visible access to a public clock.<sup>3</sup>

This public dimension remained the most important facet of mechanical timekeeping until the late seventeenth century, but the number of clocks in private houses, too, grew slowly through the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Landes 1983, 85-87). Obviously, one did not always have to own a domestic clock oneself to have access to it. Portable novelty clocks of the sixteenth century could be moved from room to room, and weight-driven wall clocks were visible to all those moving in and out of the house in which

<sup>3</sup> The earliest mechanical clock escapement was recorded in England at the Dunstable Priory in 1283, and the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw many such clocks being installed in public buildings (Glennie and Thrift 2009, 75-76; see also Landes 1983, 53; Engammare 2010, 5). For time embedded in the urban soundscape, see Dohrn-van Rossum 1996, 202-209, 212-215; Blondé and Verhoeven 2013, 224.

it was located. As a visual example, a weight-driven clock on the wall links the family of Sir Thomas More with mechanical time in Rowland Lockey's portrait of 1592, now at Nostell Priory.<sup>4</sup> The portrait was painted after a Holbein original long after Sir Thomas More himself was dead, and we have no knowledge of whether More actually owned such a clock. Its inclusion in a late sixteenth-century portrait nevertheless suggests that, at that time at least, it would have looked entirely credible in a learned elite household. If indeed More had such a clock on his wall, his wife and daughters, pictured in the portrait, as well as servants would have been able to see it.

Personal watches too were available to men and sometimes even to women, if only one had sufficient means to acquire them, and they may have contributed to a more personal experience of clock-time.<sup>5</sup> Considering the common opinion that only the elite could afford watches, it is perhaps surprising that even the wealthy yeoman William Honeywell recorded the purchase of a watch, and a purse to keep it in, in his accounts of 1596 (Snell 1907, 162). Timepieces designed especially for women resembled jewellery rather than objects of practical use, and were often worn hanging from the waist, although Elizabeth I famously had a tiny watch set in a ring. Ornamental watches were also circulated as gifts from the sixteenth century onwards (Landes 1983, 87; Sherman 1996, 84; Boesky 2000, 132-136; Donald 2000, 55, 67). We can see a small watch like this in the hand of Frances Earle in a 1630s portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger.<sup>6</sup> As many scholars have suggested, however, early modern personal timepieces should perhaps be seen as sophisticated toys rather than practical tools for tracking, or indeed changing the overall perception of time (see Sherman 1996, 83-84; Blondé and Verhoeven 2013, 232).

We should also remember that sundials, the oldest method of determining time, were not rare in early modern England, producing an altogether different frame for measuring time: while public and private mechanical clocks provided a steady length for hours, sundials measured time with unequal hours, dividing the day into temporal segments of different lengths at different times of the year (Dohrn-van Rossum 1996, 19; Glennie and Thrift 2009, 25-26). For early modern people, these two different frames existed simultaneously, and it is often difficult to determine which system they are referring to.

<sup>4</sup> See image at <<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/960059>>, accessed 15 February 2017.

<sup>5</sup> This is a key argument in David Landes' classic *Revolution in Time* (1983, 7). In the light of more recent scholarship on the scarcity of private clocks, however, our view of the causes of the evolution of early modern time-consciousness needs to be refined.

<sup>6</sup> See image at <[http://www.wga.hu/html\\_m/g/gheeraer/f\\_earle.html](http://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/gheeraer/f_earle.html)>, accessed 15 February 2017.

All in all, as Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift have pointed out, early modern England 'was a much more clock-time-literate environment than has generally been assumed' (2009, 235). Almost all early modern diarists, whether men or women, seem to have been quite comfortable with using clock-time. At the same time, they only very rarely tell us how they knew what time it was – it was taken for granted that one would know (221). We should not underestimate, then, the power that clock-time offered for early modern people looking for ways to organise their lives and practices, whether they gathered their knowledge from church clocks, sundials or mechanical clocks in their own use. With or without watches, early modern Englishwomen seem to have been very time-conscious even in their everyday lives.

### 3. *Daily Schedules*

How then did women conceptualise the temporal progression of their days? Let us start by looking at how women came to order their time around their various tasks and activities. If, as Glennie and Thrift suggest, timekeeping should be thought of as a set of practices rather than as something that is essentially 'there' (2009, 12), we should not just consider the ownership of clocks but rather the actions through which time and timing were called into being. Englishwomen's daily schedules of household and family duties, social responsibilities and a certain amount of recreation expose just such sets of practices.

Scholars have tended to stress the repetitiveness of women's work, particularly textile work which women of all classes were involved with, although in different ways. Recurring tasks such as spinning and weaving, cooking and baking, and caring for both humans and animals evoked rhythms that contributed to a temporal *habitus*, a disposition that structured the experience of time (Jones and Stallybrass 2000, 105-110). This temporal structuring established women's understanding and experience of time as episodic – governed by habitual segmentation of time to specific periodic tasks – and its uses as loaded with moral and religious meaning.<sup>7</sup> In my view, calling this episodic understanding cyclical or natural time, however, oversimplifies an extremely complex picture.

Let us look at how John Fitzherbert describes the daily rhythm of women's household work in *The Boke of Husbandrye* (1552), in a section entitled 'What

<sup>7</sup> In his classic article, Edward Thompson described preindustrial time sense as task-oriented (1967, 60). Lorna Weatherill, in turn, has suggested that women's timekeeping may have been more task-oriented than men's, as men carried their watches with them and checked them to synchronise their time with others (1988, 141). Here I attempt to show, however, that early modern task-orientation was not as divorced from clock-time as is sometimes assumed.

workes a wyfe shuld do in generall'. Following the circadian rhythm, he starts with the first moments after waking up:

First in the mornyng when thou art waken and purpose to ryse, lift vp thy hand & blys the & make a signe of the holy crosse. In nomine patris et filii & spiritus sancti. Amen. In the name of the father the sonne, & the holy gooste. And yf ye saye a Pater noster, an Aue & a Crede. (ff. 45v-46r)

Here we do not have to rely on advice literature only: that women routinely started their day with prayer is testified to by women's diaries, as we will soon see. Fitzherbert then advises women to start their housewifely duties:

when thou arte vp and redye, then fyrste swepe thy house: dresse vp thy dysheborde and sette all thynges in good order in thy house mylke thy kye, sode thy calues, fyle vp thy mylke take vp thy chyldren and aray them and prouyde for thy husbandes breake faste, dyner, souper, and for thy children and seruauntes and take thy part with them. And to ordeyne corne and malte to the myll, to bake and brue withall when nede is. (ff. 45v-46r)

After cleaning the house, women should milk the cows, wake their children and prepare the husband's breakfast. Providing meals for the household – and the household animals – at regular intervals took up a major part of a housewife's day, and she was also supposed to be present at the meals, sometimes together with children and servants. Baking and brewing, making butter and cheese, gathering eggs and growing necessary provisions, such as herbs or flax and hemp, in the kitchen garden were also counted among the housewife's routine employments by Fitzherbert. By continuously spinning and sewing, she would make the household's textiles, including sheets, tablecloths, towels and clothes. Helping her husband with filling the dung cart or ploughing and making hay was often necessary, and any products that the household would not consume themselves were to be sold at the market, whether 'butter, chese, mylke, egges, chekens, kapons, hennes, pygges, gees', or 'al maner of corne' (f. 47r). At the same time, she could also 'bye all maner of necessary thynges belonging to a household', and then make account to her husband of everything that she had purchased.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth pointing out that while Fitzherbert's book is prescriptive, the tasks it describes were necessary in any agricultural community and counted as women's work all over Europe. Not all women were housewives, of course, and not everybody baked, milked or cleaned the house, but the

<sup>8</sup> Such scheduling could also have a health-oriented purpose, as in the directions offered by Andrew Borde (1540, sigs C3v-D3r). Borde's advice on the correct temporal organisation of bodily activities is directed primarily to men, but some of it could be taken to apply to women too.

way in which Fitzherbert presents these tasks as rhythmically reiterated is suggestive of larger patterns of episodic task-orientation. Without talking of clock-time, Fitzherbert points towards different duties for morning, daytime and evening, stressing the wife's need to care for family members, servants and livestock in an orderly manner and at the right times. Seasonal duties related to planting and harvesting or rearing and butchering animals provided a wider yearly rhythm that complemented the rhythms of daily life. As we have seen, mealtimes were important points dividing the day into different sections and activities not just in Fitzherbert but in women's letters and diaries too.

In Thomas Tusser's household manual, we also get precise instructions regarding clock-time for these duties: while many of the tasks seem quite similar to those in Fitzherbert, Tusser adds prescriptions for rising at 4am in summer and 5am in winter, and going to bed at 10pm in summer and 9pm in winter (1570, f. 35r; see also Glennie and Thrift 2009, 193). With such precise instructions, Tusser must have been referring to the mechanical time of church clocks, not the unequal hours of sundials. However, Tusser advises housewives to pay heed to cocks as also telling time 'as true as a clock' by crowing at midnight, three o'clock and an hour before daybreak in winter (f. 28v). As natural time-pieces, cocks marked a diurnal progression that Tusser interpreted as a universal moral lesson about timing and household work. In the early modern understanding, there was no elemental break between natural and mechanical time; rather, it was the interplay between the temporal systems that informed timekeeping in daily life.

We may want to surmise that just fitting all these activities into one's waking hours must have been quite an undertaking. Many housewives of course had servants to help with their duties, but that introduced an extra element of management into one's days. For maidservants, the rhythms and tasks of everyday life were dictated by their masters and mistresses, but their days were naturally no less busy. In urban environments, women could also take part in the artisanal production of the family or sell wares in a family shop, and these, in turn, followed the temporal structures of urban living where time was also managed by authorities demanding that shops open and close at regular times and that people stay out of the streets during curfew (see Landes 1983, 77-78).

As the early modern period progressed and the lifestyles of the elite and the working people grew increasingly apart, however, time could seem to slow down for some elite women. Dorothy Osborne described her life in such a way in a letter to her fiancé William Temple in the summer of 1653, but here too everyday temporality is seen in terms of schedules that hark back to time kept by nature and household animals. This young woman's time was not governed by constant prayer, as it was for Puritan women, but by meals and clock-time, and she also hinted at the tedium that sometimes characterised elite women's days in the absence of obligatory housework and pressing Christian concerns:

You aske mee how I passe my time heer, I can give you a perfect accounte not only of what I doe for the present, but what I am likely to doe this seven yeare if I stay heer soe long. I rise in the morning reasonably Early, and before I am redy I goerounde the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows to hott for mee. [A]bout ten a clock I think of making mee redy, and when that's don I goe into my fathers Chamber, from thence to dinner, where my Cousin Molle and I sitt in great State, in a Roome and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner wee sitt and talk. [T]he heat of the day is spent in reading or working and about sixe or seven a Clock, I walke out into a Common that lyes hard by the house where a great many young wenches keep Sheep and Cow's and sitt in the shade singing of Ballads. [W]hen I see them driving home theire Cattle I think tis time for mee to retyre too. [W]hen I have supped I goe into the Garden and soe to the syde of a small River that runs by it where I sitt downe and wish you with mee. (1928, 51-52)

Dorothy Osborne's humorous ways of expressing herself should not cloud the fact that she felt keenly the futility of her current existence, and looked forward to a married life that would give her more responsibilities. Her religious carelessness also seemed to trouble her: 'twill not bee for your advantage that I should stay heer longe for in Earnest I shall bee good for nothing if I doe', she writes to William the year after while visiting her friends, 'wee goe abroade all day and Play all night, and say our Prayers when wee have time' (174-175). Christian timekeeping still informed the moral content of daily temporality even for those not religiously observant. Women's time management, however, was primarily thought about in terms of repetitive and steady schedules. Order and diligence were key components of women's task-oriented temporality.

#### 4. *Measuring Duration*

Many of the duties mentioned above seem to imply an awareness of rather small intervals and periods of time. Just think about cooking and baking, for instance: both are very much dependent on a sense of time and duration, even if one can also manage them by looking, feeling and tasting (see also Donald 2000, 71).

If the accounts above are somewhat vague about duration, we may get some idea of how closely women needed to pay attention to intervals of time if we look at recipe collections that offered guidance for preparing food, medicines, and cosmetics. Some of these recipes are quite simple, but many are complicated and require precise procedures and exotic or laboriously prepared ingredients. In early printed books of household recipes, such as *The Treasure of Pore Men*, published in the 1520s (Anonymous 1526?), exact timing is rare. Directions for preparing medicines are not timed, but application of them sometimes is, although in rather general terms: ointments for headache are to be applied early in the morning and late in the evening, for example, or left on for the night and removed in the morning. For more complicated

timing comparisons, rather than clock-times, are used: a pill for toothache should be placed between one's cheek and the sore tooth 'by the space that one may go a myle' (ff. x<sup>v</sup>-xi<sup>r</sup>, xvi<sup>r</sup>). However, after the mid-sixteenth century, express advice on duration becomes much more frequent. For instance, in John Partridge's cookbook of 1573, *The Huswifes Closet*, a chicken pie needs to be baked for 'one howre and a halfe' (sig. B1v).

Most sixteenth-century advice on duration in the recipe books indeed cited the number of hours needed for preparing and applying household products. 'Half-hours' and even 'quarter-hours' were sometimes mentioned as well, but minutes were not yet in use.<sup>9</sup> Gervase Markham's *The English Hus-wife*, for instance, provided a recipe for a sleep-inducing ointment that was to be rubbed on the temples and left there for up to four hours (1615, 10). Sometimes timed preparation of household products was quite laborious. Following a 1558 recipe for scented water 'fit for a queen', for perfuming linen or whitening one's face, one needed to wash, burn, boil and distil, and stir some of the ingredients together for 'the space of. vi. houres' (Alexis 1975, ff. 67r-67v). In Hugh Platt's *Delightes for Ladies*, published in 1602, a face cream demands painstaking attention: 'Incorporate with a wooden pestle and in a wooden mortar with great labour foure ounces of sublimate, and one ounce of crude Mercury at the least sixe or eight houres (you cannot bestowe too much labor herein)' (sig. G11v).

In another of Platt's recipes, a pimple salve needed to be applied on the face for one hour, and a hair colourant left in the hair to dry for a quarter of an hour, before it was washed away with soap and water (sig. H2r, sig. H10 v - H11r). Thomas Raynalde's *The Byrth of Mankynde* of 1560 advised women about raising their hairlines to fashionable heights by applying a mixture of burnt lye, arsenic and water to their forehead for a quarter of an hour, to make plucking of the hairs easy (ff. 127r-128v). During the latter half of the sixteenth century, clock-time indeed became a primary temporal frame of reference for many kinds of household work.

References to duration in household books of recipes do not automatically mean that women would have made use of such instruction. Despite this limitation, they are suggestive of a widely shared sense of specifically timed duration, which can be strengthened by reference to other instances of timing in everyday life. Although my material in this article comes from personal documents and printed books, such precise measurements of duration can also be found in court testimony and public punishments, revealing the highly developed sense of clock-time of early modern English people more generally.

<sup>9</sup> In sixteenth-century conceptions of clock-time, hour was still the basic unit, and while it could be divided into smaller parts, it was not yet understood as a period of sixty minutes. The word 'minute', at this time, was taken to mean an instant or a moment in time (Dohrn-van Rossum 1996, 282; Sherman 1996, 40, 93).

Taking a few examples from previous research, one couple in Essex were seen dallying and kissing for two or three hours in 1576 by a witness trying to sleep in the same bed, while Margaret Knowsley, whose case has been made familiar through Steve Hindle's work, was publicly shamed by making her stand in a cage in the market place for two hours (Macfarlane 1987, 298; Hindle 1994, 405). In court testimony, witnesses also described events with specific references to clock-time already in the sixteenth century (Glennie and Thrift 2009, 193; see also Blondé and Verhoven 2013, 222-224). It is indeed quite probable that the law courts were among the first contexts in which exact timing became a practical necessity and thus regularly recorded. But despite the apparent easiness with which the English resorted to the law, appearing or being punished in court were still exceptional circumstances compared to household work. Instructions in recipe collections and records of depositions both testify to early modern men and women having highly defined timing skills and a sense of duration related to clock-time even in the sixteenth century.

As Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum has reminded us, it is easy to overlook the fact that early modern timepieces, not yet equipped with minute hands, did not record both clock-time and exact duration (1996, 117-118); instead, two different instruments, clocks and sandglasses, were needed to indicate continuous time and set limits to time, respectively. Early modern women must have made extensive use of hourglasses to measure the precise durations indicated in household recipes. Sandglasses were common objects in the sixteenth century, used to measure all kinds of intervals, from cooking times to sermons and university lectures.<sup>10</sup> They were also associated with women and their work. We can see one on the table in the panel depicting Lady Anne Clifford as a young girl in her *Great Picture*<sup>11</sup> of 1646 – although hourglasses were typically depicted in art as symbols of passing time and mortality, they were also material objects that women habitually owned and used. Inventories, too, can be helpful here. I will cite only one: Sir William More collected a private account book of all the possessions he and his wife Margaret kept in their own closets in 1556. Margaret's room contained a table, a cupboard, several jugs, jars and barrels, a grater, a pastry-mould, some knives, some brushes, a pair of shears and snuffers, five books, and a sandglass (Stewart 1995, 82-83). Perhaps we should pay attention to the fact that most artefacts Margaret kept to accompany her hourglass were kitchen appliances, suggesting that the hourglass may have been most useful for cooking and preparing medicines – and for warning her of passing time when reading

<sup>10</sup> Sandglasses were a late medieval innovation that had found their way to household use by the sixteenth century. In some household manuals there were even recipes for manufacturing hourglass sand at home (Dohrn-van Rossum 1996, 117-118; Pope 2016).

<sup>11</sup> *The Great Picture Triptych*, attributed to Jan van Belcamp, is at the Abbot Hall Art Gallery; see image at <<https://www.abbothall.org.uk/great-picture>>, accessed 15 February 2017.

her books. Relatively inexpensive and accurate objects, sandglasses were of practical use in many household tasks. They were most often calibrated to measure hours and quarter-hours, and consequently account for the easiness with which small time units were spoken of in the absence of clocks with minute-hands (see Dohrn-van Rossum 1996, 272-273).

Household work was, then, much more dependent on timekeeping than we may have supposed. If one could measure hours by public clocks and bells, smaller units of time were harder to grasp without extra implements. Clocks with a separate minute hand only started to appear in the late seventeenth century, after the invention of the more accurate pendulum clocks and spiral spring watches (Glennie and Thrift 2009, 12; Engammare 2010, 41-42). Sandglasses, on the other hand, were cheap and common objects, and probably contributed to early modern notions and experiences of daily temporality more than has been acknowledged so far. They served the purposes of both busy housewives and noblewomen, who had need of measuring time not only for their domestic duties but also for their devotions.

### 5. *Pious Timekeeping*

While household manuals and recipe collections reflect a prescriptive approach to timekeeping, information about lived experiences of daily temporality must be sought in early modern women's own writing or in texts describing their personal lives. Writing women of the early modern period almost always came from an elite background, and this is of course reflected in their ideas about temporality. And yet, many of them also stressed strict scheduling. The most important task to be programmed into the day was periodic prayer, especially important in the morning and in the evening but sometimes worked into the daily programme in between too. Services in the church or chapel could also be used for this purpose, and some elite women prayed regularly with clerical help, be it Catholic or Protestant.

My first example of how women's conceptions of daily time were organised by Christian worship is related to Lady Cecily Neville, the Duchess of York. Around 1490, her household ordinances show remarkable attention to well-defined and spiritual timetables:

She is accustomed to rise at seven o'clock and her chaplain is ready to say with her matins of the day and matins of Our Lady. When she is fully ready, she hears a Low Mass in her chamber and after Mass she takes some breakfast. She goes to the chapel to hear the divine service and two Low Masses, and from there to dinner. During dinner, she hears a reading on a holy subject ... After dinner she gives audience for an hour to all who have any business with her. She then sleeps for a quarter of an hour. After sleeping she continues in prayer until the first bell rings for Evensong. Then she enjoys a drink of wine or ale. Without delay her chaplain is ready to say both evensongs with her, and after the bell has rung, she goes to chapel and hears Evensong sung. From there she goes

to supper where she repeats the reading which was heard at dinner to those who are in her presence. After supper she spends time with her gentlewomen in the enjoyment of honest mirth. One hour before going to bed she takes a cup of wine, and then goes to her private closet where she takes her leave of God for the night, bringing to an end her prayers of the day. By eight o'clock she is in bed. (Quoted in Glennie and Thrift 2009, 185)

Only a member of the highest aristocracy could spend her days in such relentless piety, and it played a part too that she was, at this time, rather an old lady. Nevertheless, we can see here how medieval monastic ideals of canonical hours were carried over to aristocratic female practice, and how daily time could be organised into a regular rhythm of devotion.

Although the ladies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to be much more moderate in their practices of prayer, the centrality of such temporal ordering within their daily routines did not diminish. Regularity of prayer was also felt as a yardstick for women's morality and honour.

Lady Margaret Hoby, we will remember, had time for private prayer and reading of the Bible, followed by some needlework, before she took her breakfast at 8 in the morning (1998, 11-12; see also Glennie and Thrift 2009, 206). Lady Grace Mildmay, in turn, imitated the devotional practices of her mother, whose prayer schedule was not only regular but highly emotional:

Mine own mother gave me a good example herein, for every morning she would withdraw herself alone and spend an hour in meditation and prayers to God, with her face all blubbered with tears. And she counselled me never to weep but for my sins, saying that those tears did never break the beauty of a woman. (Pollock 1995, 29)

Following her example, Lady Grace saw her own morning prayers as especially important. Elizabeth Joceline, writing in the 1620s, organised her morning in much the same way: 'The morning I haue dedicated to meditation, praier, good studies, and honest recreation' (1894, 51-52). And for Anne Halkett, born in 1623, the most important part of daily time management was the regular devotion learned as a young child: 'even from our infancy, wee were instructed never to neglect to begin and end the day with prayer, and orderly every morning to read the Bible, and ever to keepe the church as offten as there was occation to meet there, either for prayers or preaching' (1875, 2).

Time set aside for prayer every morning and evening, and reading the Bible daily, were clearly a central part of everyday temporal experience for early modern Englishwomen. Daily prayer not only worked as glorification of God, however, but also served as an intense opportunity for self-reflection and self-improvement, especially for Protestant women, whose awareness of sin and piety arose from the requirement of a very personal connection with God. Max Engammare (2010, 7-9, 245-247), looking at Calvinist notions of temporality, has indeed seen the obsession with accurate timekeeping as first and foremost a Protestant trend, and as closely linked with the idea

that each individual was personally accountable to God for spending each passing moment wisely. In his view, the Reformation also signalled a shift from Catholic spirituality's focus on space to a Protestant spirituality of time.

These ideas may have informed early modern Englishwomen's experience of temporality too. They seem to have enjoyed their schedule of prayer and good works, especially when combined with religious reading habits. Prayer was not felt as tedious or as a hardship. Christian morality in fact offered early modern women their most important notion of time: that time was given by God, and thus every moment of every day was a gift that should be spent to the glory of God. This deep religiosity governed all temporal organisation, but it also governed the affective charge of any task that a woman undertook.

Lady Lettice Cary, Viscountess Falkland, who died at the age of thirty-five in 1647, illustrated this affective energy that control of time provided in her schedule. In the words of her chaplain and biographer:

That her time might not be mis-spent, nor her employments tedious to her, the several hours of the day had variety of employments assigned to them; and the intermixing of prayer, reding, writing, working, and walking, brought a pleasure to each of them, in their courses; so that the day was carried about faster, than she would, and she begins in this her youth, to abridge herself of her sleep, and was oftentimes at a book in her Closet, when she was thought to be in bed. (Duncon 1908, 35)

Honouring God through pious employments and religious self-improvement could sometimes lead to extending the God-given hours of the day at the expense of rest and sleep. The most important thing about godly timekeeping, however, was an absolute need to avoid idleness – none of the precious moments provided by God should go to waste.

## 6. *Enemies of Idleness*

Early modern Englishwomen seem convinced that the personified devil would indeed find work for idle hands, and not being continually at work immediately suggested sloth and pride. The moral charge of idleness reveals how important it was to *use* time wisely. Time was to be filled and managed by persistent labour, not just allowed to pass. Lady Elizabeth Capell, for instance, was described in her funeral sermon of 1661 in these terms, actively resisting the 'spiritual enemy' by constant godly employment:

she was carefull to be continually busying her self about some good employment or other, either in her Closet, at her devotions, or in her Family, about her household affairs, or among her neighbours, in friendly and charitable visits, that so in case her spirituall enemy should come suddenly thrusting upon her at any time with his temptations, she might have her answer ready. (Barker 1661, 37-38)

Being busy was a godly attribute, signalling careful accounting of one's mortal hours. Not being busy, in turn, showed a sinful alienation from God. According to Elizabeth Joceline, 'Thou art no sooner broke out of the armes of sloth, but pride steps in diligently' (1894, 30). Dorothy Leigh, in turn, believed that 'who so is truly chaste, is free from idlenesse and from all vaine delights, full of humility, and all good Christian vertues', and 'she which is vnchaste, is giuen to be idle; or if she do any thing, it is for vaine glory, and for the prayse of men' (1616, 30-31).

Joceline and Leigh, writing primarily for their own children if also for other mothers, were especially interested in the upbringing of children, and their stress on the harmful effects of idleness should be read in this context. Idleness was particularly dangerous for children, and for two reasons: first, childhood was a time when life-long habits were formed, and using time wisely was self-evidently counted among these habits. Secondly, childhood was the time of life especially suited for learning, and so children were to be guided towards diligent study and preparation for a busy and pious adulthood (Pollock 1995, 236). Learning to shun idleness in childhood would lead to a moral aversion towards it in adulthood as well.

The stress on productive work could indeed be counted among the guiding principles of Englishwomen's habits of organising time. Their absolute certainty of the morally corrupting influence of idleness is evident in all their writing, and one could only avoid idleness by being constantly busy in good works – being busy in something less valuable would still be counted as idleness. The strength of this view is of course related to the fact that the purpose of most first-person narratives written by women of this period was religious, and mostly Puritan, self-examination. Still, the urgency with which time-wasting was condemned in all forms of early modern writing shows how deeply it permeated early modern society even outside the strictly religious sphere. We cannot overlook its enormous significance for notions of time either. At the very core of early modern temporal experience was the question of how to use time wisely.

We should of course take into account that the fear of idleness was in no way restricted to women. Moralistic male writers stressed it just as much. Leonard Wright, for instance, advised his readers to look at other creatures, as the animal sphere would put man in mind of the importance of labour. Idleness was degrading: 'hee that spendes his time in idlenesse, without trauaile of bodie or exercise of mind: is to his enemies a mocking stocke: to his friends a shame: and to the common wealth a burthen: and therefore vnworthy to liue vpon the earth' (1589, 6). In Wright's biblically informed opinion, those who did not work did not deserve to live either, whatever their gender. However, it was easier for male writers to gender idleness feminine.

Anxieties about women's use of time in men's writing stand in stark contrast to women's own views. Male writers often characterised both women

and female activities as idle, and had a completely different idea about women's relationship to time, which is where we will turn next. Nevertheless, men's criticism of female temporal practices still reinforces the contention that idleness was commonly viewed both as a moral threat and as a central element in the early modern experience of temporality.

Where the idealised picture of household manuals, all written by men, centres on the manifold duties of housewives and gives the impression that even in well-to-do households they were involved even in the most menial of tasks, some authors believed that such instruction had by no means reached all women. In line with many accounts by foreign travellers stressing the relative independence of Englishwomen, the Antwerp merchant Emanuel van Meteren testified in 1614 that the lazy women of English towns were spoiled by their freedom: they left all drudgery to their servants, sitting by their doors dressed in fine clothes, walking, riding and playing cards, or visiting their friends and feasting at child-births, christenings and churchings (Rye 1865, 72). Men typically counted all forms of female sociability as time-wasting, and even women's standard duties could be interpreted as idleness as soon as women were not conducting them alone and in silence. Looked at from the women's perspective, it seems that their time for recreation was often indistinguishable from their work: female sociability centred on places where women visited because of their duties, and their textile work often allowed for sociable conversation, whether performed outside their front doors or inside their houses (Capp 2003, 321, 330). But women, too, would have seen the corrupting influence of idleness in objectionable behaviours such as over-eating, drinking, gambling, lascivious dancing and the singing of filthy songs (Barnarde 1570, ff. 5v-6r, 10v).

Van Meteren also gestured toward a sphere that emerged particularly often in male condemnation of female idleness. For male writers of popular literature, it seemed self-evident that one activity governed women's use of time more than any other: making themselves look their best. Already in the early modern period, men seem to have thought that one always had to wait for women to get ready. According to men, women spent ages sitting in front of the mirror: they sacrificed 'more houres to their Looking-glasse, than they reserue minutes to lament their defects' in a moral or a religious sense (Brathwaite 1631, 11). Women's habit of wasting time beautifying themselves even gave rise to a well-known cautionary tale recorded in 1484: a lady who dwelled next to a church took so long every day to get ready that everybody around her grew weary and angry, so much so that one Sunday, when they could not get the service started because of her, they cursed her. The next time she looked into her mirror, it was not her own face that looked back at her but the backside of the devil, so foul and horrible that it scared her out of her wits. When at last she recovered, she was never late for church again (La Tour Landry 1906, 45).

This image of the time-consuming, God-forsaking toilette is repeated in male writing through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Brathwaite 1631, 11; see also Greene 1881-1883, 26-27; Nashe 1958a, 137-138, 150-151; Nashe 1958b, 18). In male imaginaries, women were consummate time-wasters, but some of this censure should perhaps be seen as belonging to a set of gendered tools for negotiating questions of male diligence and laziness, rather than as wholesale denunciation of women's habits and tasks. The same attitude is, in fact, evident in women's writing, too, although expressed through a condemnation of fashion rather than discussing cosmetics. Elizabeth Joceline thought that one of the principal reasons for women's stooping to idleness was that her age revered fashionably dressed women more than it did wise, honest or religious women, and she warned her unborn daughter not to make this mistake (1894, 31-32, 37-38).

For both women and men, then, avoidance of idleness was key to moral temporal management. But we can also see glimpses of women who did not take the warnings against idleness seriously, even when others may have disapproved of their easy habits. Thomas Whythorne thought it worth mentioning, in his autobiography written in the 1570s, that a widow of his acquaintance was in the habit of staying in bed in the morning until ten o'clock, and was reluctant to get up for breakfast even when her brother, with whom she was living at the time, expressly told her to do so (1961, 157). Whythorne did not feel the need to explain his stance further than mere description of the situation; he clearly believed disapproval of such behaviour to be automatic. Indeed all the women who themselves described their daily routines, as we have seen already, stressed the moral virtues of rising and praying early in the morning, making sure at the start of each day that idleness had no chance to govern their temporal existence.

### *7. Time for Learning*

Instead of daily practices such as beautifying, women themselves seem to have pinpointed intellectual pursuits as producing temporal tensions in special need of negotiation. Learning, reading, and writing were sometimes seen as dangerous and idle pastimes, but often also described as pious and edifying activities especially well in accordance with elite women's time management. The women whose own comments on the issue were recorded in our historical sources were, of course, themselves readers and writers, and understandably declared in unison that reading and writing were not idle pursuits but rather the opposite, ways into learning and piety and suitable for women too.

Avoidance of idleness was indeed connected to a good education, as education allowed women ways to counter the temptations of laziness. Lady Anne Halkett commended her mother for having her daughters well taught so that they would not be in danger of falling into idleness. In the 1620s and 1630s, her mother 'paid masters for teaching my sister and mee to write, speake

French, play on the lute and virginals, and dance, and kept a gentlewoman to teach us all kinds of needleworke, which shews I was not brought up in an idle life' (1875, 2). It is striking, of course, how different elite women's definitions of valuable uses of time were from those propounded in sermons and household manuals. While both stress the threat of idleness, definitions of what idleness entailed were inextricably class-bound. Education and wealth allowed idleness to be redefined as an absence of intellectual effort. Honing one's musical and dancing skills were not understood as a pleasurable pastime but as a way of acquiring necessary life skills, and needlework was often simply termed 'work'.

Much of elite women's time, particularly in their youth, was devoted to learning languages, sometimes with tutors, sometimes with family members. Conversation and reading in foreign languages were thus important means to defy idleness, if also ways to spend time intelligently with one's friends. Mary Basset, for instance, wrote to her sister Philippa Basset in French as early as 1538 and wished that she could spend more time with her, teaching her the language regularly, an hour at a time: 'If wishes availed anything I should be an hour with you every day, to teach you to speak French' (Everett Wood 1846, III, 27). The great example for early modern women's learned interests was Queen Elizabeth herself, who, according to her tutor Roger Ascham, spent more time in her youth in learning languages, perusing classical literature and perfecting both her handwriting and her thinking skills than anybody else in the whole country, including the professional scholars of universities. Elizabeth's daily learning routine, as described by Ascham, was extremely orderly and ambitious, and involved strict programming and timetabling (Ascham 1968, f. 21).

For elite women, enjoyment of the activities they were engaged in also seems to have been an issue. Many of the writing women commented on what their favourite activities were, particularly in girlhood when they were being schooled in accordance with the standards of their class, and also learning their habits of temporal organisation. However, it is typical that those favourite pastimes were seen as taking too much time.

Anne Fanshawe, in her memoir written in 1676, also praised her mother for forcing her to do needlework, French, and music even though she was 'a hoyting girl' and mostly interested in sports: 'yet was I wild to that degree, that the hours of my beloved recreation took up too much of my time, for I loved riding in the first place, running, and all active pastimes' (1829, 32-33). Lucy Hutchinson, in turn, learned to read at the age of four in 1624, and while she had a whole host of tutors teaching her all the necessary accomplishments – languages, dancing, writing, and needlework – she herself was only interested in reading books, so much so that her mother thought it dangerous for her health and strictly moderated her reading. As a child, Lucy's days too were scheduled around going to sermons and periods of learning and play, even though she tried to steal away to read her books in private as often as she could (1973, 288-289).

Both Anne Fanshawe and Lucy Hutchinson seem to remember their earlier selves with a certain fondness, and while they may have later looked at their childhood pastimes as a misuse of time better devoted to pious pursuits, they did not condemn their passions as pure time-wasting. Rather, both saw time spent in beloved activities as a negotiation between prescribed restraint and cherished recreation that may have proved in many ways valuable in later life.

Mary Rich, on the other hand, took a rather dim view of her youthful reading self, and particularly regretted the time, just before her marriage in 1641, that she spent with her flighty sister-in-law, who taught her to be 'very vain and foolish, inticing me to spend (as she did) her time in seeing and reading plays and romances, and in exquisite and curious dressing' (1848, IV, 21). Here it was rather the quality of the reading, combined with a similarly foolish concentration on fashion, that coloured her use of time with such a dark brush. Elizabeth Delaval, at the ripe age of 16 in 1665, also condemned her younger self on the same grounds:

nothing seem'd to me so griveous as to spend time in the learning of my duty in reading thy holy word and in praying to thee, nothing so pleasant as the waisting of my houer's in foleish devertisement's and in reading unprofitable romances. (1978, 62)

While the reading of godly books was a useful way to employ one's time, reading popular literature was counted as time wasted, even by those who had themselves displayed an appetite for it. It was up to the moral content of the reading matter whether time spent with books was useful study or a form of idleness.

In contrast, Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, according to the memoir written by her daughter Lucy, seems to have felt no shame at all about her love of reading, even though those around her may have seen it differently. Born in 1585, Elizabeth soon displayed a precocious talent for reading and foreign languages and organised her time accordingly:

She, having neither brother nor sister, nor other companion of her age, spent her whole time in reading, to which she gave herself so much that she frequently read all night; so as her mother was fain to forbid her servants to let her have candles. (Simpson 1861, 6)

Later, when Lady Falkland's mother-in-law, with whom she was not on good terms, punished her by confining her to her chamber, Elizabeth was not fazed: she entertained herself by reading until her mother-in-law took away her books, after which she set about writing poetry of her own. She is also one of the few women of the seventeenth century who confessed to doubting their religion because of their extensive reading into the subject (8-9).

But even in the very late seventeenth century, women could doubt whether their writerly undertakings were pure time-wasting whatever their topic.<sup>12</sup> Mrs

<sup>12</sup> On women's negotiation of writing and idleness, see Yandell 2000, 111-112, 127.

Elizabeth Walker, described as holy by her husband, the rector Anthony Walker, used to write secretly in her chamber and slide her book or papers out of sight, into a drawer, as soon as anybody entered. Her husband caught her thus employed several times, and lamented after her death that she did not understand how godly a woman she was: 'So tender was she rather to improve her time well, than to have it known, even to my self, how well she spent it' (Walker 1690, 5). Even if writing women themselves saw their activities as worthwhile, within their patriarchal culture they still had to juggle the meanings of reading and writing as edifying and pious activities on the one hand, and as a waste of time on the other.

While both Elizabeth Cary and Elizabeth Walker were seen as exceptional women, their reading habits, combined with the intellectual schedules, kept by other writing women, reveal how important time management was to early modern women, especially the question of how time was to be spent wisely and according to a properly gendered and class-bound programme. Learning and book reading needed to be scheduled into one's days and attention paid to how long the study periods were, in order to reach efficient 'learning outcomes', as we would say today.

This is of course not to argue that all or even most women had the luxury to evaluate their use of time on the moral scales and choose whether to engage in intellectual work. Rather, by looking at time spent in reading, writing, and learning, I want to suggest that early modern women experienced intense pressures about their use of time, and the practices that they engaged in to structure their time were a way of negotiating daily temporality through performative action. Time was not a neutral mechanical entity, but neither was it wholly natural or cyclical. Early modern women were both time-aware and time-literate, conceptualising their activities through temporal metaphors and measurements and referring to Christian values in their timekeeping. Idleness was recognised as an enemy by all early modern women, and according to their memoirs and biographies, they combated it successfully, although ways to defy idleness were various and linked to women's status in early modern social and gender hierarchies.

## 8. *Conclusion*

We must conclude, then, that women's conceptions of temporal organisation were both complex and specific. Early modern time-sense was at the same time diurnal and mechanical, relying on the circadian rhythm as well as a clock-timed episodic schedule of activities. While many of women's temporal practices were probably taken for granted and not expressly described in available sources, seemingly casual mentions of both clock-time and exact duration abound in texts describing women's daily lives and tasks.

It has been convincingly argued that technological innovations, clocks and watches among them, were an especially male interest in early modern Europe (Donald 2000, 55).<sup>13</sup> But we should perhaps consider whether women

<sup>13</sup> On women's relationship with technology and the masculine meanings of machines in the early modern period, see Sawday 2007, 148-149.

had just as much need for specific timekeeping as men – and in some cases, maybe more. Early modern women's timekeeping did not unquestionably follow the natural patterns assumed to govern temporality in pre-industrial societies, but neither was it strictly mechanical in the sense of the industrial, modern time-awareness that relies almost exclusively on clock-time. Early modern culture may not have been as time-governed as modern culture is, but women governed and controlled the temporal organisation of their daily life in a precise and elaborate manner, and often did this by reference to clock-time.

As scholars have recently shown, early modern people did not necessarily have to own clocks and watches themselves to become increasingly aware of the value of clock-time in social interaction. Rather, early modern Englishwomen's timekeeping seems to suggest a slow evolution towards increasing use of clock-time, relatively independent of innovations in horological technology. The many references to clock-time in my sources seem to corroborate Blondé's and Verhoeven's argument that while there were significant gender and class differences in the ownership of clocks and watches, early modern women's time awareness was no less developed than men's (2013, 236).

Englishwomen's experience of time may well have been task-oriented. Whether a sharp dichotomy between task-oriented time and clock-time is after all helpful when considering the early modern period is another question: it is necessary to ask whether task-oriented timekeeping also typically referred to clock-time already in the sixteenth century (see also Donald 2000, 72). Englishwomen managed their households according to detailed schedules and measured durations carefully. They were dedicated to devotional practices and appraised their times of prayer minutely. For women's social interaction too, organised timekeeping was a necessary resource, even if it has often depended on public clocks rather than personal timepieces. Early modern women thought about and organised their lives through many different temporal layers and techniques, and could also reflect upon how time impinged on their lives not just in the form of Christian mortality but also as an everyday measurable dimension that both governed them and was governed by them.

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