



Medieval Temporalities

THE EXPERIENCE OF TIME
IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

EDITED BY ALMUT SUERBAUM AND ANNIE SUTHERLAND

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D. S. BREWER

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CPL	Clavis Patrium Latinorum
EETS	Early English Text Society
EETS, OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS, ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PL	Patrologia Latina
RS	Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores
TEAMS	Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages

INTRODUCTION

Almut Suerbaum and Annie Sutherland

When Dorothea of Montau, a fourteenth-century married woman from Gdańsk, experiences visions in which she sees Christ as her divine bridegroom, she is faced with a dilemma: she is being called to action by her human husband, yet would much rather follow the calling of her divine bridegroom:

wene sy wente, das is bilcher wer, daz zy gote zcuhorde, waz her mit ir rette,
wen daz sy noch dem geheise irs erdischen manees von dem gekose gots
sich zcoge und wer bekummirt mit uzsirn dingen.

[For she considered it better to listen to what God was saying to her than to obey her human husband and tear herself away from her interchange with God, and to worry about external things.]¹

Dorothea's conflict illustrates how acutely aware she is of the fact that she is experiencing different temporalities simultaneously: her rapture has taken her out of human time, yet the call back to mundane tasks highlights that she remains aware of the ordinary time in which her husband makes demands on her and has expectations about the tasks to be fulfilled. She is clear about the difference in value attached to external human things when measured against the experience of direct interchange with the divine bridegroom, and yet remains aware of the calls of earthly tasks. Unlike her human husband, who punishes her failure to fulfil her external tasks on time with brutal blows, her divine bridegroom is both loving and understanding of the dilemma. He therefore advocates:

'Czu stunde enzuch dich von meynem liplichin gekoze und bis gehorsam dem gebote dines mannes.'

['Tear yourself away at once from my loving words and be obedient to your husband's commands.']²

¹ Johannes Marienwerdern, *Das Leben der heiligen Dorothea*, ed. Max Töppen, *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, 2, (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1863), Book II Chapter 16, p. 251.

² II.16, p. 251.

As is well known, Margery Kempe, whose life shares many similarities with that of the less familiar Dorothea, also struggles in her attempts to bridge the gap between earthly and heavenly temporalities.³ And, as with Dorothea, these struggles often manifest themselves in the context of the apparently conflicting demands made on her by human and divine spouses. At one notable moment, late in her *Book*, Margery finds herself required to assist with the care of her husband, ‘a man in gret age, passyng thre scor yer’ [a man of great age, over sixty years].⁴ Having fallen down the stairs, John Kempe ‘turnyd childisch ayen and lakkyd reson’ [became childish once more, and lost his reason], requiring help with the most basic of human functions.⁵ Seeing his vulnerability, Christ asks Margery to ‘take hym hom and kepe hym for my lofe’ [take him home and care for him in praise of me], a request at which she balks:

‘Nay, good Lord, for I schal than not tendyn to the as I do now.’

[No, good Lord, for then I would not be able to attend to you as I do now.]⁶

However, just as he did with Dorothea, Christ here gently insists that Margery attend to her earthly husband, framing this attention as service to her divine bridegroom:

‘Yys, dowtyr,’ seyd owr Lord, ‘thu schalt have as meche mede for to kepyn hym and helpyn hym in hys nede at hom as yyf thu wer in chirche to makyn thi preyeris. And thu hast seyd many tymys that thu woldist fawyn kepyn me. I prey the now kepe hym for the lofe of me [...] I wil that thu be fre to helpyn hym at hys nede in my name.’⁷

[‘Yes, daughter,’ said our Lord, ‘you shall have as much reward for looking after him and helping him in his need at home as you would if you were at church saying your prayers. And you have said many times that you would gladly looked after me. I ask you now to look after him for the love of me ... I would like you to be free to help him at his moment of need in my name.]

These exchanges highlight two central aspects of human temporality: the visionary experiences of both Dorothea and Margery enact the general dynamic of medieval spirituality according to which the external things of this world are inferior to God’s eternity. Yet their narratives do not evoke a linear sequence in

³ For discussion of the affinities, and possible link, between Dorothea and Margery, see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Penguin, 2000), p. 17. For recent discussion of Margery and temporality, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, 2012). See Chapter 3 in particular, ‘In the Now: Margery Kempe, Hope Emily Allen, and Me’.

⁴ *Margery Kempe*, ed. Windeatt, 329/6008. All quotations from *The Book* are taken from this edition and follow the format (page/line number).

⁵ *Margery Kempe*, 332/6068.

⁶ *Margery Kempe*, 331/6051–4.

⁷ *Margery Kempe*, 331/6055–332/6062.

which the joys of eternity are situated after the end of worldly time, but instead plot a certain synchronicity: experiences of being at one with God as the divine bridegroom can occur in the 'now' and are so joyful that those who experience them desire they should be uninterrupted and last forever. Yet Christ's advice to both women articulates the need for the urban housewife to live in the here and now as well. Whereas modern concepts of mindfulness advocate living entirely in the present moment, such medieval examples as Dorothea of Montau or Margery Kempe illustrate late-medieval willingness to accept the carefully negotiated challenges of living in different times simultaneously.

These passages demonstrate the ease and frequency with which medieval culture engages with multiple conflicting time frames. It is such moments of 'multiple temporality' which are at the heart of the current volume. In presenting a broad range of medieval engagements with the issue of temporality, in texts as well as in artefacts, the volume addresses the tension between different conceptions of time which has recently become the focus of medievalist discussion. On the one hand, temporality has appeared as a universal concept ever since Augustine posited that time as a concept is abstract and contested, while temporality as an experience of living in time is one of the human constants: human beings are born, grow old, and die – and unlike other forms of life, they are also aware of this. Temporality and the experience of living in time are thus human universals, yet such awareness of human temporality poses particular challenges when directed at the past. The essays of this volume therefore speak to experiences of time which may be shared across chronological distance, yet they also engage with the fundamental difficulty of recovering past temporalities.

Temporality: Time and the Experience of Time

Time may appear to modern perception as an aspect of the physical world which can be measured and observed. Such measuring of human time plays an important part in medieval culture, where life is structured by cyclical rhythms of nature, but also the liturgical year. Yet medieval reflections on time are complex and often profoundly influenced by Augustine, and an engagement with Augustinian temporalities runs through all of the chapters of this collection. As the opening examples of this introduction illustrate, such implicit engagement with Augustinian concepts is tangible not just in scholastic theology and learned writing, but in the way in which laypeople express their sense of temporality. It is the aim of this volume to demonstrate how multi-layered this engagement with the paradox of time and temporality is across European cultures, from the Western traditions to the Eastern church.

Augustine's reflections on time are not monolithic: he is not an academic philosopher, but a Christian thinker and practitioner, despite his explicit engagement with classical philosophy.⁸ As Chadwick argues, Augustine 'was

⁸ Introductions to Augustine's engagement with time and temporality can be found in Henry Chadwick, *Augustine. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), as well as *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 2nd edition, ed. David Vincent Meconi

evidently familiar with Aristotle's paradoxes, especially his argument that the past exists no longer, the future not yet, while the present is an instant without that extension which our notions of time appear to require.⁹ In adapting Greek philosophy for Christian use, he highlights the contrast between a God who transcends both time and space, and a creation in which time can be measured by the movements of the sun and moon, and in which everything embodied resides in time and space.¹⁰ Yet the *Confessiones*, Augustine's most controversial but also most influential engagement with time, are not interested so much in defining the phenomenon of time as the way in which it can be understood and experienced. This focus on self-reflection has often been described as the most obviously 'modern' aspect of Augustine's thinking – as summarized by Charles Taylor when he argues: 'Augustine shifts the focus from the field of objects known to the activity itself of knowing; God is to be found here.'¹¹ Yet this foregrounding of self-reflexive exploration is necessarily distinct from modern considerations, in that it is part of a theological, not just a philosophical disquisition, as Rowan Williams highlights.¹² What Augustine explores in his writings is not so much subjective individuality in the modern sense as a human condition. Nevertheless, this focus on mental time, or, as Nightingale puts it 'internal time-consciousness', allows an expression of the fact that temporality governs both body and soul, but may do so in different, conflicting, and contradictory ways – as the examples of Dorothea and Margery Kempe illustrate.

It is this Augustinian focus on temporality as the 'experience of time' which is central to the aspects of medieval culture assessed in this volume. In focussing specifically on *experience*, the contributions are using a frame of reference first developed by Augustine in the *Confessiones*, where he famously claimed that although he was incapable of describing time *per se*, he was able to describe his experience of time.¹³ This shift in focus widely influenced how medieval writers considered temporality, and there is evidence that medieval writers were aware of the extent to which Augustine's first-person narrative changed the perspective. Thus, the twelfth-century cleric Walter Map reflects on such shifts when, in direct reference to Augustine as a seminal thinker on the subject,

and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: CUP, 2014) and Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Once out of nature: Augustine on time and the body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). For discussion on Augustine as a theologian, see Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

⁹ Chadwick, *Augustine*, p. 75.

¹⁰ Cf John Rist, *Augustine. Ancient thought baptized* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 73–85, on Augustine's engagement with scepticism as well as Platonism.

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), p. 130.

¹² Williams, *On Augustine*, pp. 21–2, with reference to John Cavadini, 'The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine's Thought', *Augustinian Studies*, 38.1 (2007), pp. 119–32.

¹³ Cf Simo Knuuttila, 'Time and creation in Augustine', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 2nd edition, ed. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), pp. 81–97.

he contrasts his inability to define the object of time with his knowledge and awareness of the effects of time. For Walter, it is the term ‘temporalitas’ [temporality] which most effectively conveys this subjective experience of time:

‘In tempore sum et de tempore loquor,’ ait Augustinus, et adiecit: ‘nescio quid sit tempus. Ego simili possum admiratione dicere quod in curia sum, et de curia loquor, et nescio, Deus sit, quit sit curia. Scio tamen quod curia non est tempus; temporalia quidem est, mutabilis et uaria, localis et erratica, nunquam in eodem statu permanens.’

[‘In time I exist, and of time I speak,’ said Augustine: and added, ‘What time is I know not. In a like spirit of perplexity I may say that in the court I exists and of the court I speak, and what the court is, God knows, I know not. I do know however that the court is not time; but temporal it is, changeable and various, space-bound and wandering, never continuing in one state.】¹⁴

As Monika Otter has demonstrated, Walter Map’s court is an image of the world in general.¹⁵ Yet it also articulates a common epistemological dilemma:

[B]eing inside time, one cannot describe time; being inside the court, or the world, one cannot describe the court or the world.¹⁶

Otter points out that Walter Map’s stance gestures towards the Liar’s Paradox, in which, by including the speaker, it is no longer possible to assign any form of truth value to a statement. This paradoxical stance of self-inclusion points out a logical impossibility – yet it equally articulates the experience beyond formal logic. Temporality, the experience of living within a changeable, transient world, is real as a human experience even if its object, time, cannot be adequately defined from within that experience.

In his reflections on such matters, Walter Map self-consciously presents himself as ‘modern,’ contrasting his anxieties and experiences with older certainties, and his distinction between ‘tempus’ and ‘temporalitas’ is one which continues to exercise readers in the twenty-first century. Thus, for phenomenological philosophy, temporality is ‘a condition for the possibility of subjectivity,’ and it is considered distinct from concepts of time, which may refer to universal, or objective time.¹⁷ Within phenomenological philosophy, it is debated whether referring to such a distinction as one between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ time is appropriate, because the nature of the distinction between ‘object’ and ‘subject’ is what philosophers like Heidegger contest. Yet it is clear

¹⁴ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers’ Trifles*, ed. and transl. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 2–3.

¹⁵ Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 117.

¹⁶ Otter, *Inventiones*, p. 118.

¹⁷ David Couzens Hoy, *The Time of Our Lives. A Critical History of Temporality* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2012), pp. vii, xiii.

that there is a fundamental difference of perspective between the 'time of the universe' and the 'time of our lives,' and it is the latter which concerns Walter Map and the investigations of this volume.¹⁸

In order to be meaningful, any investigation of medieval concepts of temporality must be grounded in an awareness of Western European theories of time. All of the chapters in this volume are therefore implicitly – and often explicitly – situated in this broad context. We remain aware of the question which preoccupied the minds of classical and patristic thinkers, and which continues to perplex – namely, is time real? Plato, for example, defended the reality of time; even if nothing took place and there was no change, time would continue to exist as an independent entity. Aristotle, however, was troubled by this conclusion, seeming to be of the view that time has no independent reality, relying for its existence on the soul. The extensive discussion of time in his *Physics* leads to the observation that, as Ursula Coope puts it, 'time is what we count by counting nows as they pass.' If there were no counting, and no one to count, time-like changes would occur, but in and of themselves these changes would not amount to *time*.¹⁹ For Augustine, inheritor of both Platonic and Aristotelian thought, time is a source of profound ambivalence; as indicated above, it is ultimately indescribable and can be known only through its effects.²⁰ If it exists at all, it exists only in the mind, where the past can be recalled and the future anticipated. The present, however, is profoundly problematic and has, in reality, no definable duration.

A second strand of classical philosophy which became profoundly influential for medieval thinking about time was Boethius, whose treatise *De consolazione Philosophiae* (The Consolation of Philosophy, ca. 523) became one of the most popular and widely transmitted Latin texts in the Middle Ages and conveyed knowledge of neo-Platonist as well as Stoic thought to medieval readers. Like Augustine, Boethius recognised that the human experience of time is real. But he was expansive in his discussion of a God who sees 'totum simul'; uniquely privileged in his ability to apprehend everything at once, God stands outside the limits of human temporality and perceives everything as a single, timeless whole.²¹ Even the contingent future is, according to Boethius, present to God. While our experience of time is of a past, present and future,

¹⁸ Hoy, *Time of Our Lives*, p. xiv.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive account of Aristotle's philosophy of time, see Ursula Coope, *Time for Aristotle: Physics IV. 10–14* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). For this quotation, see p. 171.

²⁰ For Augustine's shifting attitudes to time, see Charlotte Gross, 'Augustine's Ambivalence about Temporality: His Two Accounts of Time', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 8 (1999), pp. 129–48.

²¹ For discussion of Boethius on time, see Robert Sharples, 'Fate, Prescience and Free Will' in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 207–27. See especially p. 217: '[...] to God all time is as the present to us ... [the Eternal Present] is explicitly contrasted with endless duration as a succession of experiences; to God past, present and future are present *simultaneously*'.

temporal reality is in fact utterly tenseless. A modern way of describing a view such as Boethius' would be to call it 'eternalism'; according to the eternalist, the past and the future exist and are just as real as the present. Those opposed to the eternalist might be described as believers in presentism; according to the presentist, present objects alone have existence. The past has ceased to exist, while the future is yet to exist.²²

While the medieval texts and artefacts under consideration in this volume might broadly be said to subscribe to a Boethian philosophy of eternalism, they are often at their most engaging when they confront the possibilities afforded by presentism. In other words, when they play with our temporal certainties, problematising any notion of past, present and future as fixed and immutable categories. The worldview which they espouse, for example, incorporates a divinity who intervenes in human history, allowing us to recognise that even if the past is real and cannot be undone by human activity, it can be rewritten by God if appropriate penitential action is undertaken. Equally, while the texts and artefacts under consideration do not contest the reality of the present, they remain acutely aware of the fact that this present exists alongside God's tenseless reality, to which it will eventually give way. Furthermore, present time is marked by cycles of liturgical celebration, which highlight the co-existence of the temporal and the eternal, reminding us that the 'now' we experience is only one 'now' among many. And finally, while the future is firmly established from God's perspective, and accessible to a privileged few by prophetic means, much of the material that we consider reminds us that our present actions can affect the shape of our future. God's mercy can – and does – trump the conventional chronologies associated with time.

Past Temporalities – Proximity and Distance

While temporality may therefore be a human universal, it poses specific questions for historical periods, for which attitudes to time and temporality are recoverable only indirectly. In recent scholarship, there has often been a tendency to assume a clear-cut division between pre-modern and modern attitudes. Modernity in particular has been associated with a radical break with earlier conceptions of time, marked by Einstein's questioning of Newtonian time, or Heidegger's insistence on time as an experiential rather than an objective phenomenon.²³ Thus Benedict Anderson's study *Imagined*

²² For exploration of eternalism vs. presentism as 'two rival ontologies', see *The Oxford Handbook to the Philosophy of Time*, ed. Craig Callender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 16–17.

²³ On the contrast between eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophical positions and those of twentieth century modernism, see Christian Kiening, 'Hybride Zeiten, Temporale Dynamiken 1400–1600', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 140 (2018), pp. 194–231, with reference to George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the history of Things* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962).

Communities (1991) posited a binary divide between medieval 'apprehension of time' and Enlightenment temporalities based on measuring time.²⁴ Yet as Frakes and Cohen highlight, such a binary division reflects a tendency to consider the pre-modern period as monolithic, foreign, and other.²⁵

Recent studies have challenged such assumptions by pointing out the multiplicity of medieval temporalities. Dinshaw did so by refracting medieval ways of constructing 'now' through the historiographical lens of amateur medievalists from Longfellow to Hope Emily Allen, the first editor of Margery Kempe, while at the same time 'queering' the canon of seemingly structured chronological hierarchies in favour of multi-layered approaches.²⁶ Cox, MacAvoy and Magnani build on this in their consideration of gender, time and memory; while the title of the volume suggests their subject matter as 'medieval culture', the focus of the volume is in fact more narrowly conceived and concerns literary texts from the British Isles, albeit in their linguistic multiplicity from Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse to Norman French.²⁷ Most recently, Kiening and Stercken have brought together a series of studies on late medieval temporalities, focussing on the traditions around 1500 and arguing for a 'fluidity of late medieval and early modern culture' which manifests in textual innovations as well as in the 'texture of the artefacts and media.'²⁸

The current volume builds on these in contesting monolithic views by demonstrating the range of approaches to temporality within medieval culture, and challenging the view of a homogenous, linear progression from less to more developed attitudes to temporality. Unlike earlier studies, this volume encompasses a broader geographical and disciplinary range: at its heart, it engages with medieval historiography and its endeavour to understand concurrent and conflicting ways of structuring human time, but at the same time focusses on the materiality of articulating such insights, and in particular on the artistic, literary, and linguistic forms which such articulation takes. Because the volume spans a range of media, from concrete artefacts to their imagined representation in a vision, from historical events to their echoes in literary narratives, from abstract speculative theology to its enactment in devotional practice, and from cyclical lyric to linear narrative, it is able to

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991; 2nd revised ed. London: Verso, 2016).

²⁵ For a critique of Anderson's approach, see Kathleen Biddick, 'Coming out of Exile. Dante on the Orient Express', in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 35–52, and Jerald Frakes, *Vernacular and Latin Literary Discourses of the Muslim Other in Medieval Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 20.

²⁶ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, amateur readers, and the queerness of time* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 28–30.

²⁷ *Reconsidering Gender, Time and Memory in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth Cox, Liz Herbert McAvoy and Roberta Magnani (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015).

²⁸ *Temporality and Mediality in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), p. 9.

engage with an essential aspect of medieval temporality: works of art thus create, rather than simply record, human experiences as well as insights.

Just as medieval views of space are not abstract, conceiving it instead as defined by its boundaries, Dinshaw highlights that medieval notions of time often – though not exclusively – focus on the fact that ‘time is lived; it is full of attachments and desires, histories and futures; it is not a hollow form.’²⁹ Moreover, medieval culture is shaped by an awareness of human mortality, and this awareness is not just the subject of learned disquisitions by university-trained theologians, but finds expression also in proverbial sayings: ‘Media vita in morte sumus’ [In the midst, of life, we are in death] is a reminder of the fact that life needs to be lived in the awareness of its transient nature, while the wheel of fortune captures the uncertainty and instability of temporal states in an image.³⁰ Such medieval focus on human temporality rests on a specific form of binary distinction, which is fundamental to its understanding, even if the nature of the binary opposition is constituted differently by different writers: human temporality is characterised by transience and thus contrasts with divine eternity, because the omnipotent creator God is fundamentally distinct from his creation. This has consequences for the way in which the present is conceived: while Aristotle configures time as linear, with the present as a point on the continuum which divides past from future, Augustine, Boethius as well as the Dominican Eckhart von Hochheim, commonly known as Eckhart, mark important, yet also very different ways of foregrounding this difference between human and divine.³¹

In Book IX of the *Confessions*, Augustine constructs his own conversion as an extended reflection on the nature of human temporality. Neither the past nor the future have a tangible link to the present moment, yet the acts of memory and desire can capture both by internalising them. Thus, both past and future are mediated through perception; as Carruthers puts it, they are not ‘things’, but ‘representations’ which leave traces in human memory.³² Boethius insists on the reality of such human experience of time, yet his focus is the sharp contrast in which such human experience stands to God’s ability to apprehend everything at once (‘totum simul’). In vernacular sermons which exposed him to charges of heresy, Eckhart, in drawing on Boethius as well as Augustine, maintains the fundamental distinction between divine eternity and human transience, yet maintains that the human soul nevertheless participates in divine eternity: his image of the divine spark residing in the human soul is a way of capturing the ‘eternal now’.³³

²⁹ Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, p. 3.

³⁰ Gerhard Jaritz, *Zwischen Augenblick und Ewigkeit: Einführung in die Alltagsgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), p. 10.

³¹ M.R. Pranger, *Eternity’s ennui: temporality, perseverance and voice in Augustine and Western literature* (Leiden: Brill 2010), p. 39.

³² McAvoy, *Reconsidering Gender, Time, and Memory*, p. 7; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 238.

³³ On Eckhart and his conception of the ‘eternal now’, see Suerbaum in this volume, with further reading.

Contemporary ways of 'living in the here and now' have been shaped directly and indirectly by medieval thinkers, often in ways that are no longer obvious to us. Eckhart's radical ways of thinking about asynchronicity were instrumental in phenomenological philosophy of the early twentieth century. In constructing an 'authentic present', Heidegger in particular draws on Eckhart. Auerbach, by contrast, is inspired by Tertullian's way of articulating the relationship between Old and New Testament as one of figural patterns, in which the past is neither a simple shadow eclipsed by the present, nor the present merely an allegorical construction pointing to the future, but a way of investing the present with aspects of the past and the future. Foucault's concept of heterotopic spaces can be seen as reflected in the concept of the late medieval anchor-hold which 'combines the mundane here-and-now and the transcendent'³⁴. It is such aspects of multi-layered perceptions of the present in which the current volume is interested. Unlike Gumbrecht, whose binary opposition between a medieval 'culture of presence' and a modern culture of signification has been criticised as an over-simplification, the essays in the current volume therefore foreground recent studies of medieval mediality for an investigation of ways in which memorial acts can invest the present moment with special significance which is both more nuanced and more closely related to medieval ways of thinking about temporality.³⁵ The aim therefore is not only to understand medieval phenomena through modern frames of reference (as with Dinshaw), but to unearth the variety of ways in which medieval texts and contexts capture the experience of being in time, of this world, yet also outside it.

The four sections into which the essays in this volume fall have been organised around aspects of past, present, and future – categories which writers and artists of the period use as points of reference in order to conceive temporalities while at the same time often problematising this chronological temporal scheme. In so doing, the essays reflect the volume's overriding aim to demonstrate how heterogeneous medieval conceptions of time can be, and how widespread the fascination with temporalities which are disrupted, cyclical and non-linear.

The essays in part one, 'Multiple Temporalities', explore the ways in which historical accounts reflect on the multiple layers in which time can be experienced. The opening chapter focuses on England and the anonymous thirteenth-century *Vita Aedwardi regis*, a text interwoven with a fear of the imminent end of time. Exploring questions of temporality and prophecy, temporality and narrative, and temporality and the eternal, Sykes opens up central themes shared by many of essays in this volume. Yet in addressing the very specific reality of death as the end of the future and the beginning of the past, her chapter emphasises the impact which conceptions of temporality have beyond the confines of texts. In Chapter 2, Philippa Byrne concentrates on a collection

³⁴ McAvoy, *Reconsidering Gender, Time, and Memory*, p. 101.

³⁵ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: what meaning cannot convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); for a critique, see *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

of letters attributed to the thirteenth-century cleric Adam Marsh. Written in anticipation of the Apocalypse, these letters exploit the hortatory potential of temporal uncertainty. In its dominant focus on culturally – as distinct from individually – lived time, this chapter raises distinctive issues. Yet in its interest in the potential redemption of lost (or unwisely spent) time through wise penitential activity, the chapter echoes themes articulated in of much material in later parts of this volume. How one accounts for one's present and one's past will determine how, and where, one spends one's future. Chapter 3 examines the temporal economy of ecclesiastical foundations in England designed to secure prayers – especially 'perpetual' prayers – for the dead. Drawing on sources from specific local action, such as wills and deeds of donation, the chapter analyses the ways in which perpetual property and eternity required activity through and in time.

While the opening section illustrates the ways in which Latin-trained historiographers reflect on their task of recovering the past in the present, and how historically demonstrable practices allow us to recover approaches to eternity and temporality, part two, 'Lyrical Time', turns to vernacular writing. Augustine's *Confessions* provide the well known example that song, with its suggestions of present performance and cyclical term, is as powerful a framework as linear narrative for reflections on temporality. The chapters of this section thus assess the complex strategies in which lyric texts engage with an experience of time as both linear and cyclical. In Chapter 4, David Bowie considers the oeuvre of the thirteenth-century Tuscan poet Guittone d'Arezzo, discussing the 'strident temporality' which he invokes in order to distinguish his pre- and post-conversion selves. Using Guittone as a case study, Bowie suggests that the realities of textual culture, and in particular of manuscript culture, in which early drafts of texts continue to circulate alongside later drafts, cause the Augustinian account of time to come a little unstuck. While Augustine can argue that the past and the future do not exist, Guittone's past texts do, and they persist in projecting an image which he is keen to discard. Jonathan Culler's iterable lyric now (which proclaims the presence of the pre-conversion self just as forcefully as it does the post-conversion self) is at odds with the linear, confessional narrative which Guittone is attempting to inhabit. Chapter 5 compares three sonnets by Cavalcanti, Dante, and Petrarch in terms of the different temporalities they enact and the modalities of desire they represent. Considering the lyric 'now' as a suspension of time, Manuele Gragnolati and Francesca Southerden focus on the relationship between time, subjectivity and desire in Cavalcanti, Dante and Petrarch. Their interest in the temporality of epiphany recalls Suerbaum's interest in the temporality of ecstasy, with which this section began. The section concludes with an analysis of temporality in religious as well as secular song. Almut Suerbaum uses Heidegger's concept of temporality as the 'authentic present' to explore German mystical lyric and strophic song which, in some sense, perform moments of ecstasy. Considering the relationship between music and time, as well as the temporality of narrative, this chapter highlights forms of literary engagements with matters of philosophical and theological import.