

Editorial

This issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, like its three distinguished predecessors, takes as its topic a subject that cuts across traditional disciplinary lines: *Authorship* (vol. I), *Shakespeare and Early Modern Popular Culture* (vol. II), *Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture, 1500-1750* (vol. III), and now, for this volume, *Service and Servants in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1750*. In each case, the topic itself invites scholarly work that combines disparate methodological approaches, as well as multiple geographical areas. While early modern England remains at the center of this volume, important connections are made to France and to Italy as well.

Scholarly work on servants has grown unmistakably in recent decades, as continuing archival work has been made readily available in digital form to a wider community. Post-colonial readings of culture have also offered new ways of looking at how 'service' is represented, and links between 'service' and 'servitude' or slavery have been fruitfully explored. Some literary works, such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, have undergone a sea-change rich and strange under such intellectual pressures. And many elements of popular culture, from *Upstairs, Downstairs* to *Downton Abbey*, have deployed a gauzy nostalgia to dramatize the high/low split in social status. Less sentimental works, like the harrowing film *12 Years a Slave*, offer an entirely different view of service and the racial aspects of the master/slave dialectic.

This issue begins, as is customary, with two overviews of the subject, distinguished by their chronological coverage but also by their approaches. Elizabeth Rivlin notes the extremely wide range of possibilities in the term 'service' itself, which occurs not only within the domestic household but also in much wider arenas, and it can encompass subordination and equality, the willingly chosen and the enforced, the human and the nonhuman, the corporeal and the spiritual, the perspective of those who proffer service and those who receive it. Service often carried connotations of performance, either formally in the theater or informally in the ritualized or routinized behaviors, gestures, and modes of speech expected of individuals engaged in particular forms of service.

She notes the growing interest in the subject in literary studies from the 1990s on, beginning with Mark Thornton Burnett's *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997), and continuing with three major books published in 2005: Linda Anderson's *A Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays*; David Evert's *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England*; and Judith Weil's *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays*, as well as a special section edited by Michael



Neill in the 2005 *Shakespearean International Yearbook*, entitled 'Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service'. 'Distanced from a class-based, antagonistic model', Rivlin notes, 'service emerges from these studies as dynamic and interactive; it affects masters as much as it does servants, and it is potentially instrumental for both parties'. A few years later, David Schalkwyk argued, in his *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (2008), that service was essentially performative, while Rivlin's own *The Aesthetics of Service in Early Modern England* (2012) argues that 'service is fundamentally a representative practice, in which acting for one's master shades, often imperceptibly, into acting as one's master, and that authors drew on this analogy between service and fictional forms to invest both with aesthetic power and social potential'. Rivlin also notes how the category of service overlaps those of gender and race, with reference to the first book-length study to consider women in service – Michelle Dowd's *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2009) – and Susan Amussen's *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (2007), among many other works surveyed.

Jeanne Clegg's equally wide-ranging review starts from the position that (borrowing from Carolyn Steedman's 2007 *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*) 'Domestic servants were used – more than any other social group – to write histories of the social itself'. Clegg surveys works throughout the long eighteenth century, including perspectives on the issue in Italy and France, as well as England, which is her main focus. Her analysis works through some of the recurring tropes of service: the idea of 'lifecycle service', and the voices and agency of servants. Clegg analyzes the work of social historians such as Bridget Hill, whose *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (1996) opened up modern interest in domestic service, Tim Meldrum's *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (2000), which applied more rigorous methods of inquiry, and books which have offered first-hand evidence of female servants' experiences in middle class households. Archival sources such as the *Old Bailey Online* and its sister archive, *London Lives*, she observes, now 'make it possible to write short biographies of most of those who spent part of their lives in London between 1672 and 1913 (a large section of the population of England)' and can offer a powerful analytic purchase both on works such as Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, *The Unfortunate Mistress* and *The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd ...* (1724). As Clegg shows, the shifts in the methods and practice of social historians have led to important new insights into service and servants; the growth of interest in material culture has likewise been enormously productive in opening up analysis of how early modern households were structured and how they operated. Literary historians, such as Donna Landry, who brought the work of laboring-class women to light in the 1990s, and Kristina Straub, whose recent *Domestic Affairs ...* (2009) explores emotional and erotic tensions in master-servant relations, suggest avenues for new research.

Most of the developments that Rivlin and Clegg survey can be found illustrated in ‘Part Two’ of this issue, ‘Case Studies’, particularly a focus on the agency of servants in the early modern period. In the first section, ‘Cultural Services’, Emily Buffey examines Richard Robinson’s poem *The Rewarde of Wickednesse ...* (1574); Robinson was a servant in the household of George Talbot and his more famous wife, Elizabeth Cavendish (‘Bess of Harwick’), at the time that Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned in Sheffield Castle. The poem – based on a *de casibus* framework with elements of the dream vision – raises the issues of the literacy of servants, their often ambiguous place in the household, and the kind of ‘voice’ necessarily adopted. Ben Crabstick’s essay similarly examines another poet-‘retainer’, William Basse, and his poetic collection *Polyhymnia*, written nearly a century after Robinson’s. Crabstick shows how Basse ‘both enacted and reflected upon aspects of his service role’ in a variety of ambitious poems – again, the question of the kind of ‘voice’ the poet-servant could adopt, and his place in the household, is prominent. Marcy North takes up the topic of the production of literary manuscripts more broadly, studying the vocation and social place of household scribes, for whom the copying of literature ‘was not their primary occupation’ – that is, they were not antiquarians or amanuenses, but household retainers. Deploying a deep analysis of several manuscripts, North looks more closely at figures such as Thomas Whythorne, a music tutor and composer serving in several noble households. Some of the best evidence of scribal service in households, she notes, comes from manuscripts owned by elite literate women, who made greater use of secretaries. Michelle Miller extends this topic to France through her analysis of the memoirs of a seventeenth-century noble, Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully, who wrote his text ‘as if from the narrative stance of his servants’. In this fascinating instance of Elias’s ‘civilizing process’, Miller argues that Sully created a narrative alter-ego in order to ‘think through personal shortcomings and explore the possibility of improving his manners’.

The second section of ‘Case Studies’ features three essays analyzing ‘Servants on Stage’. Emily Gerstell considers how Helena, the central female figure in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, has been misconstrued in earlier criticism: her relation to the Widow Capilet and Diana has in effect been romanticized, without closely considering how class and economic issues dominate their interactions. The ‘traffic in women’, Gerstell shows, helps explain many of Helena’s actions; in highlighting two of the key economies of the play, service and marriage, Gerstell shows how the idea of ‘service’ illuminates a character not usually thought of in such terms. The play defies the normative expectations of comedy in its exposure of ‘the willingness of women to traffic in women – and in themselves’. In his essay revisiting the infamous Thomas Overbury affair and its reflection in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s play *The Changeling*, John Higgins digs into manuscript accounts of the legal proceedings against Frances Howard as well as ballad and pamphlet accounts, with a

particular focus on the purported actions and discursive representations of Howard's servants as they were embroiled in the murder of Overbury, and the trials associated with it. Higgins employs the concept of the 'public transcript' of authority, 'which posits that subordinate members of society use rhetoric and performance to struggle for control over the significance of hierarchical political ideologies'. Higgins shows how the play negotiates its way through the minefield of controversy surrounding Howard's case, identifying how the 'performance of service' raises complex problems. Sonya Brockman also develops at length the idea of service as a performative act in her essay on *The Taming of the Shrew*. The play's famous frame-story of Christopher Sly and the trick played on him by the Lord and his servants has long been a feature of criticism on the play, but Brockman encompasses and goes beyond this concern with a detailed analysis of Lucentio's servant, Tranio, whose arc in the play at times reflects that of his masters but also that of his fellow servants. Impersonating his master Lucentio (and vice versa), Tranio 'performs' the role of lordship even as his master 'performs' service; Tranio's very name – from the Latin preposition *trans*, 'across' – suggests how the play destabilizes notional boundaries of servant and master. Tranio ultimately returns to his status as servant, but much has changed in the course of the play, which suggests in its various plots how both class and gender can be socially-constructed, performed identities.

The third section of 'Case Studies', 'Regulating Service', provides three very different approaches to some of the ways that servant identities and social boundaries were policed in the early modern period. Liam Meyer delves into the records of the London Court of Requests (from 1603-1625) to examine cases where servants, laborers, and apprentices sued their masters for back wages or mistreatment. He analyzes how the parties on either side of legal disputes employed various rhetorical tropes – usually, of submission and deference, but mixed with reminders of reciprocal obligation and social justice, at times turning 'the ideology of paternalism against their masters'. Thus, Meyer also examines, as Higgins did, the 'public transcript' of idealized master-servant conduct, noting that what 'appears to be false consciousness may instead represent tactical victories' for subordinates. Stefania Biscetti's essay approaches master-servant language tropes from a very different point of view, that of contemporary linguistics: politeness theory integrated with speech act theory. Her primary aim is to 'clarify the status of threats and reproaches vis-à-vis impoliteness and aggressiveness', and bases her analysis on twenty-five conduct books addressed to masters, servants, and apprentices (published in English between 1660 and 1750). Between them, Meyer and Biscetti provide a comprehensive account of key strands of master-servant discourse. Sylvia Greenup moves from a focus on legal or prescriptive texts to an anonymous novel, *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House*, which was published in 1759, coinciding with the opening of the Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes. The aim of the Magdalen

Hospital was to re-train fallen women for careers in domestic service. The novel constructs four first-person accounts, three of them by women who had worked as prostitutes. Greenup shows how this particular type of servant-woman's imagined testimony functions, rather like Meyer's mediated legal depositions, to offer another sounding of the servant's voice.

In this issue's final section, Raffaella Sarti offers a survey both broad and deep of ideas about servants and how they should be treated that circulated in early modern Europe, particularly Britain and Italy, but with reference to France as well. Of particular interest are early modern travel books, which offer both 'the internal as well as the external gaze' on the countries she examines. She finds, to take one example, that Defoe's well-known complaints about servants – their insubordination was said to affect 'the whole Body of the Nation' – though they were sometimes reflected in foreigners' reports of their travels in England, often they were not. Sarti also reviews a wide swath of scholarship on the frequency of marriage and celibacy among male and female servants. Purported and actual differences between servants and masters in England and Italy had much to do with the relative ratios of male to female, and of marriage within or without the households served. Her analysis offers several ways in which the findings of contemporary historical research might be taken up by future scholars.

We conclude with an Appendix chosen by Jeanne Clegg and Paola Pugliatti of significant and provocative texts dealing with servants and service. These selections go beyond the geographical and temporal boundaries within which this issue's articles fall, including ancient and modern texts, as well as German, Spanish, Russian, and American sources.

I speak for my co-editor, Jeanne Clegg, in thanking all those who submitted their work for consideration, and for the patience of the authors in this issue who responded to our requests and suggestions. We are also grateful to the many readers (who shall remain anonymous) around the world who provided thoughtful and forthright evaluations of the essays submitted. We are particularly grateful to the steady, thoughtful, and wise guidance provided by Paola Pugliatti and the editorial team that, under the expert guidance of Arianna Antonielli, prepared the text for publication.

Finally, we note with sadness the passing – in the summer of 2014 – of a good friend of *JEMS*, Professor Christopher Brooks of the Department of History at Durham University.

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