

## Exploring Perspective in Poetry

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For nine weeks this summer, I studied poetry with Professor Walton, advancing my knowledge of poetry as well as completing a chapbook of poems that revolved around the topic of obsession. My original plan, to focus strictly on my own obsessions, then explore perspective by attempting to embody them, changed early on in the project, as I realized I was more interested in thinking about how obsession manifested in the poetry I was reading.

While I did not strictly analyze the poetry I read through the poet's biography, I spent time researching the personal history of each poet, and, through that process, began to wonder what role obsession played in their life, especially as many were labeled women who wanted too much – or at least wanted more than they were supposed to. Emily Dickinson especially guided my thinking through this and my question of obsession soon became less about particular obsessions or infatuations, but about *obsession* and *want* among the poets I read. Soon the arc of my chapbook began to form, as I tried to articulate what infatuation with another person feels like (merging of obsession and want) and the shame that can follow it.

Though thinking about perspective became less of the main focus of my work, the simple act of writing every day, not only when I had something to say about myself, has changed my relationship with writing drastically. As the goal of the project began to become clearer, I felt myself learning how to write with an awareness of how each poem I wrote not only made sense in itself but made sense in a larger narrative.

The poetry I have read and analyzed in-depth over the course of this summer includes: “The Blue Estuaries” by Louise Bogan, “The Master Letters” and “Stay, Illusion” by Lucie Brock-Broido, “Selected Poems” of Gwendolyn Brooks, “Men in the Off Hours” and “Glass Irony and God” by Anne Carson, “The Kingfisher” and “What the Light Was Like” by Amy Clampitt, all poetry by Emily Dickinson, “Selected Poems” of Rita Dove, “Selected Poems” of Edna St. Vincent Millay, all poetry by Marianne Moore, all poetry by Lorine Niedecker, and “Selected Poems” of Adrienne Rich. I read and reflected upon four fundamental biographies about Emily Dickinson in an attempt to fully understand her poetry and person, as she was foundational for many of the other poets I read, and has been extremely influential in my development as a poet this summer. I also read a few technical books on poetry and literary theory which provided me with a more technical language for evaluating both the poetry I was reading and the poetry I was writing.

This summer I've learned not only the importance of writing methodically, intending to create a final, cohesive project to be shared, but the importance of writing intuitively and being adaptable and open with creative projects. I also feel significantly more grounded in understanding and writing with an awareness of (some) strands of American poetry. I look forward to carrying this knowledge with me in future creative and critical projects, especially in imagining and compiling future collections or chapbooks of poetry.

**Faculty Mentor: Professor Anthony Walton**

**Funded by the Nellie C. Watterson Summer Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts**