

## **New Rhymes and Rhythms: Searching for Queer Temporalities Through the Poetic Medium**

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This summer I wrote a collection of poetry exploring questions of temporality. To form a critical basis for this work I drew on queer theories of time and space for charting the present and future in relation to the past. Each week I paired a theoretical or critical reading with a poet's work to develop a robust understanding of how and why authors play with time. These authors included Heather Love, Jack Halberstam, Juliana Spahr, and Emily Dickinson. Each week I shared poems with Professor Rahimtoola, which we discussed alongside key theory points, devices and temporal choices displayed by the week's poet, and further questions arising from the readings. I selected and edited 6 poems for a chapbook-length collection. My final collection spans numerous lines of thought which caught my attention. One in particular, "namesake," is a personal reflection on the Jewish tradition of naming after the deceased, exploring a nonlinear approach to family relation and subverting reproductive ideas of legacy-making. Another, "'There was time now'," captures a moment of stillness against the drive towards success and productivity, through the image of near and far parts of the quad viewed without the aid of glasses.

Over the summer I found how truly expansive and generative the field of queer temporality is. I previously understood queer temporality as deviations from normative structures of time such as futurity as progress/linear time, bodily/sexual temporalities of reproduction, and the developmental model of a lifespan from childhood to adulthood. The theory I read expanded my knowledge of key arguments shaping the field to include Love's study of the past through negative affect, which focuses on seemingly anachronistic emotions such as grief, loss, shame, and melancholia as indications of a queer continuity of experience; and Halberstam's "low theory," or analysis parallel to academic routes through sources generally excluded from scholarly conversations and valuing "queer failure" as resistance to stage-based maturation. I was and continue to be fascinated by the centrality of temporal structures to societal expectations which, despite increased awareness and acceptance of queerness, still place normative privilege on cisheterosexuality. I aimed to both examine existing structures and discover reimaginations of temporal organization within and without individual selfhood, tracing these diverging paths through poetry.

This summer was an unmatched opportunity to explore queer theory. I truly enjoyed the moments of inspiration which broke through, developing poetic craft and learning where my strengths/working points are through independent work and discussions with Professor Rahimtoola. I struggled to find my voice in purely theory-based poems, finding more promise in personal experience and observations of the world around me. I also gained experience in editing poems, making sure metaphors remain consistent, fleshed out, and not crowded out by a surplus in one piece. Moving forward, the summer research fellowship experience will aid in refining my honors project with particular attention to my writing practice. By the end of the summer, I decided to redirect my honors project as a literary critical analysis of temporality in poetry. I am especially excited by the way Emily Dickinson negotiates finite and infinite scales of time in her poetry through careful juxtaposition which construct intricate and paradoxical layers of meaning. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to explore queer theory and poetic craft this summer, testing my ability to process these ideas as original poetry or as analysis of other poets' work to further adapt my plan for honors over senior year.

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### **References**

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