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 stagelifespan