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Jennifer Eun-Jung Row, *Queer Velocities: Time, Sex, and Biopower on the Early Modern Stage*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2022. xii + 224 pp. Notes, references, and index. $99.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9780810144712; $38.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9780810144705; Open Access (eb). ISBN 9780810144729.

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In *Queer Velocities: Time, Sex, and Biopower on the Early Modern Stage*, Jennifer Eun-Jung Row uses theories of queer temporality and biopolitics to explore the rules binding theatrical time in seventeenth-century France. Coining the term "queer velocities," Row emphasizes the affective nature of temporality--"the supplementary, wayward affects generated by sensations of rushing, haste, delay, and drag"--to challenge assumed temporal norms on stage (p. 5). Row looks to the theatrical tradition of the unity of time, wherein tragedy must take place within twenty-four hours, to illustrate how playwrights utilized velocities to move their audiences emotionally and affectively through both the embrace and the rejection of such rules--rules that were embedded with biopolitical intentions. In doing so, her goal is to unpack "how the early modern staging of different speeds and slownesses of lived experience yielded unexpected affective intensities and a messy, inchoate constellation of relation and feeling," presenting queer possibilities beyond identitarian categories, utilizing a range of alternate understandings of queer disruption (p. 5). Row achieves this goal through careful reading of four tragedies that prove useful to specialists of French theater and more general readers of queer theory alike: Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637) and *Polyceute* (1643), and Jean Racine's *Andromaque* (1667) and *Bérénice* (1670).

Technologies of time and its regulation within and beyond the theater prove of particular importance to Row's argument: innovations in timekeeping "prompted a new regulation of temporality--indeed, a new mode of temporality itself becoming proper--in the late seventeenth century" (p. 12). Her attention to these technological advancements emphasizes both the shifts in time during the period she studies and the differences in how we now understand it. Row notes that "when 'temporality' is invoked by queer theory, it is often a modern sense of temporality rather than one that allows the richness and strangeness of the premodern confrontation with temporality to fully emerge" (p. 15). Such assumptions have the potential to leave scholars with an incomplete or even inaccurate understanding of the velocities found on stage during the seventeenth century for, as she states in the opening pages, "time has not always 'felt' the same, nor has it organized lived experience in the same ways" (p. 5). Building upon Stuart Sherman's claim that "by the late seventeenth century, even technologies as minor as the clock dial or the

minute hand 'called attention away from endpoints and invested it in middles,'" Row examines both rushes and drags to argue how plays by Corneille and Racine challenge normative endings in favor of queer potential (p. 62). Combined with detailed attention to both the theoretical conversations surrounding the theater during the seventeenth century and in modern literary criticism, she presents a compelling model of queer reading that can be applied widely to theater within and beyond this specific context.

Chapter one, "The Queer Disunity of Time, or The Affective Affordances of *Le Cid*," is divided into two distinct sections. The first builds upon the work of the introduction to "reexamine the intense scholarly focus on the absolutist and literary effects of the delimitation of twenty-four hours of represented time on stage," emphasizing a lack of attention to the affective impacts of theatrical conventions (p. 33). In the second, Row uses this context to explore the "temporal torsions" she locates in Corneille's *Le Cid*, questioning how various forms of theatrical control intervened in the production (or disruption) of pleasure (p. 34). Digging deeper into the concept of *bienséance*, described in the introduction as "the rule of propriety" that governs what can be acceptably portrayed on stage, Row considers how such guidelines impact theatrical temporality (p. 20). She suggests that queer velocities come into play in moments of transgression, drawing together commentary from theater critics and theorists alike to illustrate how attempts to control the representation of time on stage was tangled with biopolitical concerns. Turning her attention to *Le Cid*, Row contextualizes the play through the debate surrounding the play's temporal discomfort, including Corneille's defense that it was the rule of the unity of time that was "the *agent* of this hastening or constraint" (Row's emphasis, p. 45). Reading a few key moments from the play, Row shows how the playwright's "divergence from temporal norms" in presenting Chiméne's grief--at times rushed and at others slowed--proves to be a source of alternate opportunities (p. 48). She explains, "Chiméne's manipulation of velocities is precisely what allows her an expression of power in a social situation that should have reduced her to powerlessness--without a father to guide her or a husband to defend her" (p. 49). This removal from heterosexual structures combines with the disruption of time to embody Row's concept of queer velocity and demonstrate its complex connection to biopolitics.

In chapter two, "Animate Ashes: The Time of Ruins and Remains in *Andromaque*," Row turns from Corneille, "whose tragedies often elicited critiques for stuffing too many events within the presumed 'un tour de soleil,'" to Racine, who "effortlessly adhered to the régles classiques: the unity of time, place, and action" (p. 61). This adherence, however, should not be seen as an avoidance or refusal of queer velocities: instead, the play's narrow focus highlights its heroine's queer velocities. Row emphasizes Andromaque's delays as a refusal of the familiar and appropriate roles of motherhood or widowhood and zooms in on her relationship with her husband's ashes "as its own queer mode of love and attachment" (p. 67). Reading through the lenses of Amber Jamilla Musser's objectum sexuality and Mel Chen's animacy, Row argues that Andromaque's connection to the ashes, which serve as both ruin and remainder, allows for queer velocities that veer "away from norms of chronobiopolitical temporal governance" (p. 75). The language of ashes extends beyond the physical object Andromaque is attached to into the postwar setting of the play, further emphasizing the pull between past, present, and potential future on an individual and historical level. Her queer desire for the ashes and the slowness of her actions creates a "contingent temporality" which, like the ash, presents a paradox that challenges "sexual-temporal normativity" (p. 87). As with Chiméne, Andromaque's refusal of normative

roles--a refusal brought about by trauma--opens up queer potential; and while such potential cannot divert tragic ends, it should not be ignored or overwritten.

Where chapters one and two focus on the queer velocities of individuals, chapter three, "*Polyceute* and the Speeds of Sects (Sex)," turns to "what it means for one to desire one's tempo to be exactly calibrated to another's" (p. 26). Returning to Corneille, Row unpacks how *Polyceute* presents the queer velocities of religious fanaticism, illustrating how the process of conversion is temporally disruptive on both an individual and political/biopolitical level. This disruption stems from Polyceute's friendship with Néarque--a friendship that not only enables his conversion but directly interrupts reproductive futurity. Layered with religion is a paradoxical colonial context: the play is set in the Roman colony of Armenia and was composed in the midst of France's own pursuit of colonial expansion. Row suggests that "the time of life in the context of the play is similarly both shortened and lengthened in one colonial thrust, a thrust that has a winnowing function that decides between valuable and inviable lives," emphasizing the contradictory nature of colonialism, which simultaneously produces and destroys as it manages multiple modes of temporality (p. 98). Sovereign power's participation in inconsistent temporality is, however, carefully managed--a sharp contrast to the hasty intensity of Polyceute's obsession with Néarque. Row carefully attends to Corneille's language to draw out the wordplay surrounding "sexe" and "secte," play which further emphasizes the interplay of religious conversion and sexual seduction. Notably, where some queer velocities seek suspension, "Polyceute and Néarque seek not only to speed up their actions…but also to hasten the sought-after end," allowing their velocities to move with a matched directionality that runs counter to and disrupts sovereign biopolitics (p. 119). Row suggests that while the pair rush towards martyrdom, it is not a true end but rather, through their disruption, the advent of something new.

Chapter four, "Circling the Hymen: The Temporality of Dilation in *Bérénice*," opens further from a duo to a triad, rejecting the typical reading of love triangles as competitive in favor of seeking a polyamorous alternative. Returning to Racine, Row notes that the simplicity of *Bérénice* and its near lack of action allows for repetitions that possess considerable "emotional and affective potential" as well as presenting "nonprogressive temporality [that] competes against the linearity of sovereign progress characterized by futurity" (p. 128). Pushing back against the typical focus on heteronormative pairs in evaluating this play (and most plays), Row refocuses on the triangle of Titus, Antiochus, and Bérénice to emphasize the flow of desire among the three rather than allowing rivalry to shut down queer potential. She suggests that the apparent lack of action pairs with both silence and repetitive speech to allow "the dilation of narrative time," which increases affect as it disrupts forward motion in favor of circular velocities (p. 140). References to the hymen become central to Row's reading as a simultaneous point of division and convergence among the threesome, a reading that is then flipped to consider references to the veil of friendship that Antiochus "uses to cloak his true affections and remain close to both Bérénice and Titus" (p. 145). Because the ending of the tragedy is apparent from the start, the shift from "a nebulous temporality of…dampened circular repetition, to a temporality that is broken down, measured, and fragmented" is inevitable but should not be allowed to undermine the importance of the triangulated, polyamorous flow of feeling that Row highlights (p. 160). Rather, it furthers the argument that early modern queerness must be considered beyond identity categories and within seemingly normative contexts.

Row concludes with a consideration of the relationship between queer velocities, utopianism, and the mechanisms of theatrical representation, using Voltaire's *Zaïre* (1732) to mark the shift that occurs with the abandonment of principles of neoclassical unity. This final reading, like those that preceded it, is dense with theory and close attention to rhetoric. In many ways, *Queer Velocities* embodies the moments of rush and drag that it explores within its canonical tragedies: at times moving efficiently through its explanations and at others following diversions that allow a deeper consideration of theoretical or contextual concerns. This is not a weakness: it is an engaging mode that requires careful attention on behalf of the reader to fully reap its benefits. Row expertly employs a wide range of theoretical modes so that each chapter presents its own distinct conception of queer velocities, emphasizing the vastness of queer potential beyond the potentially limiting tendency towards queerness as an identity category. Undoubtedly a useful tool for those studying seventeenth-century French theater, it is equally useful to those studying queer theory outside the field, such as this reviewer. As a whole, *Queer Velocities* proves an important intervention into the study of seventeenth-century French tragedy as well as providing a broader challenge to the ways in which we consider the temporality, theatrical and otherwise, of the past.

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