

NOTED

TULANE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Volume 12
Spring 2016



Welcoming First Folio!

**Liberty Brass Band led a jazz
funeral for Shakespeare around
Newcomb Quad in honor of the
First Folio! Grand Opening**

NOTED

NOTED, VOL. 12

SPRING 2016

COVER IMAGE

LIBERTY BRASS BAND AT TULANE

PHOTO BY: ARIELLE PENTES, SLA

EDITORIAL

MICHELLE KOHLER EDITOR

CONTRIBUTORS

MITCH THERIEAU, MELISSA BAILES,

THOMAS BELLER

LAYOUT & DESIGN

ROBIN CENAC

RCENAC@TULANE.EDU

TULANE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NORMAN MAYER 122

NEW ORLEANS, LA 70118

PHONE: 1-504-865-5160

FAX: 1-504-862-8958

WWW.TULANE.EDU

ENGLISH@TULANE.EDU

PUBLISHED BI-ANNUALLY BY THE TULANE DEPARTMENT
OF ENGLISH

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

TULANE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

THOMAS BELLER



BY: MITCHELL THERIEAU

Thomas Beller is in the middle of a lot of projects. A reflection on the Beatles, a book about lead (the element, that is, both physically and symbolically), and a historical piece following refugees in the wake of World War II all number among them. When I met with him in his book-lined office—which was just as book-lined as his recent essay “Stages of Arrival” promised—our conversation turned from a sustained consideration of youth and rock and roll to the role of the audience in writing, and beyond. On the issue of audience, Beller says: “I don’t try to *do* anything to my readers,” per se. Beller’s essays in particular play out this philosophy, much of the time feeling like a journey rather than a concerted effort to make a particular impression.

The theme of journey or process is one Beller takes up in both his writing and his teaching. In the description for his Fall 2016 course on the personal essay, he writes that “the essay is a process. Thinking and talking about this process—of discovery, memory, invention—will be central to our approach as readers and writers.” In “Stages of Arrival,” Beller stretches out what we normally think of as a single moment--arriving in New Orleans--into a beautiful, protracted process that encompasses settling on (and into) a new house, contemplating how the live oaks have been transformed into the material of the city itself, and everything in between. A piece he wrote several years back for the *New Yorker*’s Culture Desk, where he is a frequent contributor, extends the seemingly discrete length of a song—“Drain You” by Nirvana—into a journey that he and his young son take together, simultaneously into the future and the past. Perhaps the best example of Beller’s interest in process is his most recent book, *JD Salinger: The Escape Artist*, which recently won the New York City Book Award for Biography/Memoir. It is as much a book about J.D. Salinger as it is a book about the process of writing a book about J.D. Salinger, about the ways Beller’s and Salinger’s worlds overlap.

Beller traces the ways that writers’ different works intersect, but he also has a keen interest in the convergence of writing and music. When I asked him about how writing and music are alike, he explained: “Sometimes writing can be like a jam,” building around a repetitive figure or riff and unfolding from there into a fully formed work. “But sometimes it’s more like the Beatles’ approach, where you start with a fully formed idea and then play with the arrangement,” complicating and recasting your idea in the process. As an example, he cited the classic Beatles song “Getting Better All the Time,” where Paul McCartney sings, “I’ve got to admit it’s getting better / A little better all the time,” at which point John Lennon chimes in with “It can’t get no worse.” For Beller, these are the kinds of tensions that make great writing, and they are particularly instructive because they mirror the mass of contradictions in the real world that essay writing aims to interpret. Like the houses in New Orleans that Beller sees as “another way the city smuggles its complicated past into the future,” Beller’s work lives in these moments where seemingly contradictory meanings converge and point to something much larger than they would seem to at first glance.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

MY YEAR AT HUNTINGTON LIBRARY

By: Melissa Bailes

When I got the call offering a year-long (2015-16) fellowship at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, I jumped at the chance. This library holds extensive research collections in British and American history, literature, art history, and the history of science. The Huntington's specializations in fields most central to my own scholarly projects, on eighteenth-century British literature and the history of science, for which it's become one of the most important repositories in the world, made it an ideal location to finish the research and writing of my book manuscript, *Questioning Nature: Natural History, British Women Writers, and the Quest for Originality, 1750-1830*. This book argues that major women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reconfigured literary, social, and national orders and identities through the natural sciences, and particularly natural history (botany, zoology, and geology), achieving intertextual modes of originality that competed with ideas of solitary genius. In fact, this project benefitted from an earlier, short-term fellowship held at the Huntington when I was a graduate student in 2010, so it seemed fortunate and fitting to be back in these rare collections for the study's completion.

During my recent time at this library, I viewed a number of its unique holdings in natural history, including a copy of *The Natural History of Birds* (1807) by the poet, Charlotte Smith, as well as Thomas Pennant's *British Zoology* (1768) and *History of Quadrupeds* (1793), Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* (1797), and Robert Thornton's *New System of Linnaeus* (1799). In addition to contemporary scientific theories and discoveries, several of these texts also provide illustrations that helped me in conceptualizing my argument and will serve as images for my book and future articles.



Still, it could get pretty exhausting to spend every minute of every work day in the rare book room, and the Huntington has a readily available remedy, offering further venues to recharge the mind and spirit. Part of what makes this institution so amazing is that in addition to its library holdings, it's also well known for its British and American art galleries and for its Botanical Gardens.

It was wonderful to be able to so easily step outdoors after looking at texts about natural history and explore an array of botanical species in the many immaculate gardens, such as the Shakespeare Garden (where they also held festivities for the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death, which helped me to feel slightly less bad about missing Tulane's great celebrations of this occasion), as well as the Chinese Garden, Japanese Garden, Rose Garden, Jungle Garden, Desert Garden, and so on, drawing over 600,000 visitors each year. While on these walks through the gardens, I sometimes would come across other scholars similarly enjoying a respite from the books, and then good conversations about our work would develop. Indeed, although a friend once joked that the Huntington grounds and galleries are an "amusement park for the cultured adult," the space of this institution gains much of its meaning from the over 1,700 scholars from around the world who visit the collections annually. Opportunities to converse with this constant flow of researchers as well as with the other long-term fellows and the library's curators were invaluable to me. Over the course of the year, I participated in a weekly long-term fellows' seminar where we shared our writing and ideas, and I had the chance to deliver public lectures about my project as well. Although it was hard to be so long away from New Orleans's terrific food, people, and culture, the Huntington was an intellectually exciting and productive place to spend a year.





COVER STORY

WELCOMING FIRST FOLIO!

By: MICHELLE KOHLER & MITCHELL THERIEAU
Photographs by ARIELLE PENTES



As I arrived at the Newcomb Art Museum, the parade was already pouring out of the doors and into the street. Dodging twirling white umbrellas and brass horns, I eventually fell in with the crowd, right as the Liberty Brass Band struck up its opening tune, a kind of slow, loping dirge led by famed local musician Dr. Michael White. As the music and the procession would have told you, it was a second line jazz funeral—standard fare in New Orleans. But a quick look at any of the cardboard cutout faces many parade-goers carried would also have told you that the parade's honoree had been dead for hundreds of years—four hundred years, to be exact. It was William Shakespeare's jazz funeral, a high point in a dynamic series of Shakespeare-related events Tulane hosted this spring in correlation with the opening of the First Folio exhibit at the Newcomb Art Museum. Halfway around Newcomb Circle, Peter Cooley, English professor and Louisiana Poet Laureate, read a poem John Milton wrote for Shakespeare, and then Dr. Michael White continued to lead his band in a rousing number that brought us back into the Gallery to see what we were all there for: an original copy of the first folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623. The Folger Shakespeare Library chose to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death by bringing the First Folio to one university, library, or museum in each state. Thanks to English Professor Michael Kuczynski's initiative, Tulane University was selected as Louisiana's Folio host during May 2016. The First Folio is an impressive sight, to be sure—but even more impressive with some context.

Our resident Shakespearean Scott Oldenburg, an associate professor of English at Tulane, explains exactly why the First Folio matters so much: “The First Folio of Shakespeare’s works was a major undertaking bringing together 36 plays, eighteen of which had never been printed before. Without the First Folio there would be no *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and more. It’s doubtful that we would revere Shakespeare the way we do without these plays. It’s rare that one gets the opportunity to view a First Folio. One has the chance to bask in the aura of a cherished object, but more importantly, viewing the First Folio allows for a look at the material history of the book, its binding, the page layout choices of its compositors, the marginal notes of its early readers. The glass case around the book reminds us of the fragile history of the specific folio we have on view, the care it took to keep it intact through plagues, fires, wars, and any number of other natural and human disasters. The mere existence of this book, then, reminds us to preserve the best in humanity against the worst.” If the book is a reminder of the need to preserve the best in humanity, the second line parade was a reminder of our imperative to celebrate it. Remarkably, this second line was a continuation of another second line—one that happened halfway around the world, where jazz funerals are less of an everyday occurrence. On April 23, Professor Kuczynski and School of Liberal Arts Dean Carole Haber led a second line through Stratford-upon-Avon, the Bard’s birthplace and the global hub of all things Shakespeare ever since.

Thousands of revelers turned out, pressing up against metal barricades to drink in the jazz and celebrate the great playwright with distinctly New Orleanian, and Tulanian, flair. What better way to celebrate Shakespeare’s

immeasurable impact on essentially everyone who came after him than a far-flung, transatlantic second line? Another high point among the Folio events was the English Department’s Ferguson Lecture, which featured internationally recognized Shakespeare scholar James Shapiro. Shapiro, in a talk entitled “Shakespeare in America,” offered a series of lively anecdotes illustrating the ways individuals throughout American history have used the plays to come to terms with their own times: Ulysses S. Grant rehearsed the role of Desdemona at a military camp in Texas in the lead-up to the Mexican-American War, for example, and in 1962 writer Mary McCarthy reimagines *Macbeth* as a small-minded member of the bourgeois.

Shapiro reminds us that although the First Folio was printed in England in 1623, it is very much a part of American history and contemporary life. Rounding out the festivities in New Orleans was a series of talks and workshops, including a teachers’ workshop at the Museum led by Professor Oldenburg; a lecture entitled “Is Shakespeare Enough?” by Hillary Eklund, associate professor of English at Loyola University; and a lecture at the Historic New Orleans Collection, “‘All the World’s a Stage’: Shakespeare on the Stages and Streets of New Orleans,” by Oliver Hennessy, a professor at Xavier University. Shakespearean actor Lisa Wolpe also presented one-person show, “Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender,” in conjunction with the exhibit. One thing in particular is abundantly clear from this rich array of events: while the First Folio is a historical relic, it is not the proverbial stone tablet, immutable and absolute. Just the opposite, in fact: for a volume of works by a man now dead for 400 years, it is remarkably alive, both changing with the times and changing the course of our times.



FACULTY & STAFF

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In spring 2016, **Melissa Bailes** had two articles about British literature and the history of science published or accepted for publication in the journals *Eighteenth-Century Studies* and *Studies in Romanticism*.

During this time, she gave invited talks on these subjects at both UCLA and at the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA.

While completing a long-term fellowship at the Huntington, she also was invited to write a post about some aspect of her research for this institution's blog, which can be found

at: <http://huntingtonblogs.org/2016/04/thomas-pennants-literary-appeal/>

Thomas Beller's essay "The Drowning," about coastal erosion in Louisiana, appears in the July/August issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. He contributed "Layover in Dubai," to the anthology *Airplane Reading*, co-edited by Loyola professors Christopher Schaberg and Mark Yakich, recently published by Bloomsbury Books.

Peter Cooley, Senior Mellon Professor in the Humanities and Director of Creative Writing gave readings of his own poetry and conducted workshops throughout the state of Louisiana as part of his duties as Poet Laureate of the state. He read at LSU, UNO, the Jefferson Parish Public Library, the Alvar Library, the Gonzales Public Library, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the People's Program, the Leonidas Street Community Arts Center, the Columns Hotel, and the Lusher and NOCCA Creative Writing programs. In May, Cooley organized and hosted the poetry reading at the State Library of Louisiana in Baton Rouge and he appeared as a panelist at the Tennessee Williams Festival. He also appeared at the New Orleans Poetry Festival and read a



poem he had written for the inauguration of President Fitts at the inauguration ceremony on March 17th. In June, Cooley gave a reading of his own work at the Great Writers Conference in London, England. He was chosen as one of eight "Louisianians of the Year" by *New Orleans Magazine*. Cooley's recent poems appear in *Agni*, *Conte*, *Christian Century*, *Commonweal*, *Crazyhorse*, *Guernica*, *Louisiana Cultural Vistas*, *New England Review*, *North American Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Pleiades*, *Plume*, *Poetry East*, *The Missouri Review* (featured poet), *The New Yorker* (print and digital editions), *The Sewanee Review*, and the *Southern Review*.

Michael Kuczynski was awarded the Suzanne and Stephen Weiss Presidential Fellowship in recognition of his sustained record of effective, inspiring and distinguished teaching.

Michelle Kohler gave the keynote talk, "Fatal Promptness: Dickinson, Clocks, and the Disarray of Time," at the Emily Dickinson Big Read event at Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Alabama in April 2016. She also presented a paper at the Emily Dickinson International Society Conference in Paris in June 2016, and her review of *Toward a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism* appeared in *Legacy*.

Scott Oldenburg presented papers at the Shakespeare Association of America (New Orleans, March 2016) and Renaissance Society of America (Boston, April 2016) and has two articles forthcoming: "The Petition on the Early English Stage," *SEL* 57.1 (2017); and "Multiculturalism and Early Modern Drama" in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming). In June he received a grant to travel to The Folger Shakespeare Library to participate in a series of workshops on teaching Shakespeare to undergraduates.

Professor **Molly Anne Rothenberg's** article, "Jane Austen's Wit-craft," was published in *Lacan, Psychoanalysis, and Comedy* (Cambridge University Press), eds. Patricia Gherovici and Manya Steinkoler. Her review of Evan Gottlieb's *Sir Walter Scott and*

Contemporary Theory appeared in *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*. "The Alluring Cause: Graham Harman's Crypto-Lacanian Object-Oriented Ontology" is forthcoming in *Subject Lessons: Hegel, Lacan, and the Future of Materialism*, eds. Slavoj Zizek and Russell Sbriglia, (Columbia University Press).

Executive Secretary **Barbara Ryan** received the 2016 SLA staff award to acknowledge her outstanding contributions to the English Department and University as a whole.

Jesmyn Ward has been named one of two winners of the prestigious Strauss Living for literary excellence. The \$200,000 award, given every five years by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, will allow Ward to devote two years to writing full time.

Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé was awarded the ATLAS (Awards to Louisiana Artists and Scholars) grant in honor of the scholarly merit of her work. This award will allow Zumhagen-Yekplé to spend a year working full-time on her book manuscript, *A Different Order of Difficulty: Reading Literary Modernism after Wittgenstein*.



STUDENT AWARDS

DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

**Newcomb-Tulane College
Senior Honors Scholar**
Mitchell Therieau

**A Studio in the Woods Residency for an
Outstanding Senior in Creative Writing**
Anna Torcson

**The Award for Service to the Literary
Community**
Carolyn Canulette

**The Class of 1903 Shakespeare Prize for Best
Shakespearean Essay by a Woman**
Hadley Williams

**The Dale Edmonds Prize for Best Short Story
by an Undergraduate**
Anna Currey

**The Donald Pizer Award
in American Literature**
Mitchell Therieau

The Henry Clay Stier Award in English
Carolyn Canulette

**The Pierce Butler Prize
for Excellence in English**
Allison Saft

**The Senior Achievement Prize
for Excellence in Creative Writing**
Justin Picard

**The Virginia Gleaves Lazarus
Memorial Award**
Rachel Marsh

**School of Liberal Arts
Undergraduate Commencement
Student Speaker**
Mitchell Therieau

**Tulane34 Award Recipients from the English
Department**
Carolyn Canulette
Sheldon "Ryan" Hitchens

**School of Liberal Arts
William Wallace Peery Society**
Mitchell Therieau

Phi Beta Kappa 2016 New Inductees

Victoria Barry
Carolyn Canulette
Nicholas Cummins
Leah Fox
Rachel Keitelman
Rachel Marsh
Alexandra Moody
Matthew Moore
Lauren Oberheim
Allison Saft
Mitchell Therieau
Bria Trosclair

GRADUATE AWARDS

Isabel Crevasse won the Richard P. and Jean A. Adams Memorial Award for her essay, "Textual Intercourse: Tracing the Unification of Essential and Aesthetic Language in James Joyce's *Ulysses*," written for T.R. Johnson's graduate seminar on James Joyce. This prize is awarded annually for the best essay by a graduate student in the English Department. Hannah Horowitz received honorary mention for her essay, "Life as a Prayer: Grace and Reconciliation in Marilynne Robinson's *Lila*," written for Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé's seminar on modernism and the novel.

Congratulations to our PhD students who successfully defended their dissertations and earned their doctoral degrees this year:

Jason Markell: "A Calculated Withdrawal': Postmodern American Novelists, Their Politics, and the Cold War," directed by Joel Dinerstein

Natalie Ferreira: "Wresting and Wrestling with Fin Amour: The Effect of Underprivileged Social Groups Cooption and Adaptation of an Elite Persona," directed by Scott Oldenburg

Elizabeth Kalos: "Making a Way Out of No Way': Zora Neale Hurston's Hidden Discourse of Resistance," directed by Felipe Smith

Aleksandra Hajduczek: "A Cry of Wind Through a Ruined House': Trauma and the Contemporary Troubles Novel in Northern Ireland," directed by Molly Travis.

WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE

BY: MICHAEL KUCZYNSKI

Time and time's passing is one of literature's favorite themes. Poems are written in meter, which is a kind of time: as the poet and essayist Wendell Berry points out, one of their main purposes is to "slow language down," so that readers can savor it. Even *vers libre* or free verse, which abandons meter, asserts its own timeliness—the sort typical of both deliberate discourse and idle banter, a moment-by-moment form that demands close attention as an aid to memory. Novels have their peculiar narrative trajectories: they mimic and play with time.

One of the most famous novels, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, valorizes the hours, minutes, and seconds of a single day in Dublin, as these are lived by the book's protagonist, Leopold Bloom, and vicariously by the reader. Plays since the classical age have been understood as the very embodiment of time—and of place and action. When these "unities" they were supposed to observe were flouted during the English Renaissance by a master playwright, William Shakespeare, everyone sat up and paid attention. And they're still paying attention in 2016, four hundred years later, on the quatercentenary of the Bard's death. The Tulane English Department and the School of Liberal Arts have been centrally involved this year in honoring Shakespeare's achievement—one that is of his own time (he is the quintessential early modern writer) and that is timeless. On April 23, at the invitation of the Shakespeare Birthday Trust and the town of

Stratford-upon-Avon, we staged a traditional jazz funeral for him in the place of his birth and death. On May 9, when the Folger Shakespeare Library's *First Folio!* exhibit opened on the Tulane campus, in the Newcomb Art Museum, that jazz funeral had a local reprise. In October it will have a third iteration, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, at the Folger itself, the last component of a threefold tribute to the ongoing importance of Shakespeare and the humanities generally to our international, national, and local cultural life.

The generous donor who is supporting our efforts, New Orleans native, bibliophile, and Tulane parent, Stuart Rose, told me that he wanted to celebrate by his gift three things he loves: his home town, the importance of books and reading, and his daughter's university. My thoughts return to Stuart's enthusiastic memorializing while writing this letter, as I reflect on the deaths this year of two major figures in our departmental history, who influenced many of our students profoundly and who were instrumental in shaping my own career at Tulane: Michael Boardman, former chair of the department and a scholar of eighteenth-century literature; and Marvin Morillo, one of its most fabled teachers and a scholar of Shakespeare. When Michael and Marvin passed away, I thought not so much about their absence as their ongoing presence—their determination to make the English Department, as it continues to be, one of the strongest at Tulane and their passionate commitment to the study of literature. Mike hired me in 1987 as a fledgling assistant professor; Marvin's office was next to mine for several years on the second floor of Norman Mayer Hall, the English Department's campus home. Like literature itself, departments such as ours are both bound by and transcend time: their contributions, because these are inescapably human, are both historical and eternal. We couldn't do the fine work the humanities labor at daily without the scholars and teachers who came before us. Or, to put the matter as Shakespeare does in his final play, *The Tempest*: "What's past is prologue!"

