

TWO EXTRAORDINARY WEEKS IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, APRIL 5 - 19, 2016



Dear friends,

Our regular departmental newsletter, now annual, will appear early in the fall semester of 2016. In the meantime, however, we have had such an extraordinary semester of activity that we could not resist sharing with you the period of its greatest highlights, the two weeks between April 5 and April 19. Many of you were engaged with the activities of

these two weeks: Shakespeare activities that are part of the year-long "Buffalo Bard" celebration; the inaugural Robert Creeley Lecture and Celebration; the Departmental Reunion; the two-day Poetics Conference; Pulitzer-prize winning alumnus Tom Toles' visit on April 14-15; and the culmination of Shelley Jackson's year of visiting the campus as our first WBFO Visiting Professor in the Arts on April 18 and 19.

And these events are only the highlights! During this same period, the department hosted a lecture by Columbia University professor Brent Edwards as part its Juxtapositions series on April 15; Edwards's most recent book, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation,*

and the Rise of Black Internationalism (Harvard UP, 2003), was awarded the John Hope Franklin Prize of the American Studies Association, the Gilbert Chinard prize of the Society for French Historical Studies, and was a runner-up for the James Russell Lowell Prize of the Modern Language Association. During the weekend of Creeley and Poetics events, the Poetry Collection hosted an exhibit (curated by alumnus James Maynard, PhD 2007) called "Poetry in the Making: The UB Poetics Program 1991-2016." This exhibit will remain up until sometime in September. The Buffalo Film Seminars framed this two-week period, starting and ending on Tuesdays, by showing three films: Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*; Claire Denis's *Beau Travail*; and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*. And a few days after its conclusion, Just Buffalo Literary Center's BABEL series hosted Karl Ove Knausgård, April 21, introduced by Center Artistic Director alumna Barbara Cole (PhD 2006). In fact, it was hard to set boundaries on this exhilarating period, since so much was going on before the 5th and has been happening since the 19th.

We hope you enjoy these signs of continuing vitality, creativity, and intellectual stimulation in your home department, and look forward to seeing you at events to come.

Cordially,
Cristanne Miller



Bvffalo Bard 2016: 400 Years Since Shakespeare

It's been a great spring semester for "Bvffalo Bard 2016: 400 Years Since Shakespeare," the year-long, region-wide series of public humanities events organized to commemorate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. During and immediately around the April 5th-19th period:

* Significant library exhibits have been opened in virtually every UB Library: Health Science, Law, Music, and even Science and Engineering. On Shakespeare's birthday, April 23, UB's First Folio was officially digitized, so you can now examine it electronically at <http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/collection/LIB-RB001/>. Even actor Kevin Spacey—a famous Richard III—went up to the Poetry Collection in Capen 420 to view UB's four 17th-century Shakespeare Folios right after his sold-out April 27th UB Distinguished Speaker's lecture!



*The 2016 UB Humanities Institute Conference in Three Acts with Two Interludes, "Object and Adaptation: The Worlds of Shakespeare and Cervantes," held its first two Acts, the March 28th visit of First Folio scholar Dr. Emma Smith of Oxford University, and the April 6th visit of Dr. Roger Chartier and Dr. Peter Stallybrass of the University of Pennsylvania, to speak about our rare book holdings and the history of the book.



*Two Interludes followed: the April 5th undergraduate conference on "Shakespeare's Afterlives: Contemporary Responses to Shakespeare 400 Years Later," which featured papers and performances by some 30 undergraduate students from some 15 majors, and the April 22nd graduate student conference on "Shakespeare Pedagogy and Adaptation" featuring Syracuse University musicologist Dr. Amanda Eubanks Winkler.

*On April 15, distinguished visiting scholar Professor WooSoo Park of Hankuk University in Seoul, South Korea, a noted translator of Shakespeare's plays and Sonnets, lectured on "Shakespeare Studies in North Korea."

Still to come in this exhilarating year are:

- this summer's 41st anniversary productions at "Shakespeare in Delaware Park" on their new stage;
- more in-town screenings of Shakespeare-related films;
- the Buffalo Humanities Festival, September 22-24, on the theme of "Renaissance Remix," critically examining the category of "Renaissance" as it applies to both 15th-17th century Europe and Buffalo's current revival;
- the final Act of the "Object and Adaptation" scholarly conference on October 13-14;
- a "Shakespeare Jubilee" on October 15 at the Hotel @ the Lafayette;
- two Shakespeare-themed productions—*Return to the Forbidden Planet*, a sci-fi rock'n roll *Tempest*, and the classic *Midsummer Night's Dream*—by UB Theatre and Dance.

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CREELEY CELEBRATION APRIL 7 - 8, 2016

April 7

Creeley and France - International Innovative Poetry

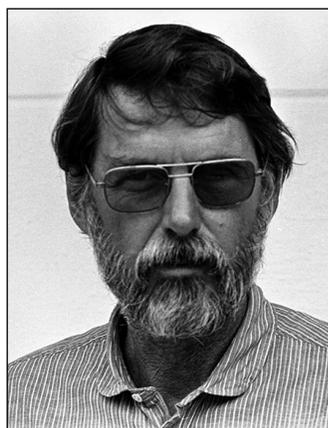
The original founders of the Buffalo Poetics Program included Raymond Federman, at that time the Romance Language and Literatures Department Melodia E. Jones Chair. Federman, a French native writer, poet, and essayist, used the power of his Chair to invite well-known French writers and poets to stay for a week in Buffalo, read poetry, and meet with the poets of the Poetics Program. A few of them wrote texts as sign-posts of their memorable stay—among them, Michel Butor, Michel Deguy, and Claude Royet Journoud. Reciprocally, American poets from Buffalo such as Robert Creeley and Charles Bernstein often visited France and were well acquainted with French contemporary poetry and the leading groups supporting transatlantic poetic relations, such as Orange Export Ltd. This is why, on the occasion of the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Poetics Program, it was appropriate to offer, *en lever de rideau*, a special session devoted to this privileged international reciprocity in favor of new modes of poetry: "Robert Creeley and France – International Innovative Poetry." Two French scholars, specialists of American literature and poetry, Abigail Lang (Université de Paris-7) and Vincent Broqua (Université de Paris-8), gave lectures that analyzed the importance and reception of Creeley's poetry in France as well as the importance of the institutional model of the Buffalo Poetics Program for French academics and poets, Broqua concluded that many attempts to create such a group, including the Poetics Center of Jean-Marie Gleize at Ecole Normale Supérieure (Lyon), unfortunately have floundered, thus the continued admiration in France for the Buffalo model. The eminent French poet, Jean Daive (a French translator of Creeley's works) and the renowned U.S. poet Norma Cole also read bi-lingual versions of texts, some written by Creeley and one specially written for this event by Daive, entitled "Robert Creeley et le temps de l'animalité" (Robert Creeley and the Time of Animality).



Photo by George Life

-- Jean-Jacques Thomas, Melodia Jones Chair, RLL

INAUGURAL ROBERT CREELEY LECTURE & CELEBRATION OF POETRY - APRIL 8



As part of the celebration of its 25th anniversary, the Department's Poetics Program has inaugurated an annual lecture series in honor of Robert Creeley, internationally acclaimed and legendary poet and UB Professor of English from 1966 to 2003, who was instrumental in founding the Poetics Program.

Thanks to donations from several parts of the university and from the community (especially riverrun), the Department and Poetics Program organized two days of events honoring Creeley, followed by a departmental reunion and Poetics conference. The major events occurred on April 8, at the Albright-Knox Gallery. After a welcome from UB President Satish Tripathi, and heart-warming words from Creeley's widow Penelope and son Will, the audience was treated to a beautifully made and rarely seen film, *Willy's*

Reading, showing the poet reading poems and commenting informally on them to Will, his then-infant son (directed by SUNY Distinguished Professor Bruce Jackson and SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Diane Christian).



Photos by Bruce Jackson / SUNY Distinguished Professor

\$25,000 GIFT TO THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT TO ENDOW CREELEY LECTURE

An anonymous donor has given \$25,000 to endow the Creeley Lecture and Celebration of Poetry. With this gift, the lectureship will continue into perpetuity. To help the endowment grow, you may donate online at www.giving.buffalo.edu/creeley. Or you can call 855-GIVE-2-UB (toll free), noting that this is an **English Department, Creeley Celebration gift for UB Foundation**, or you can mail a check to:

University at Buffalo, Department of English
306 Clemens Hall, Buffalo, NY 14260

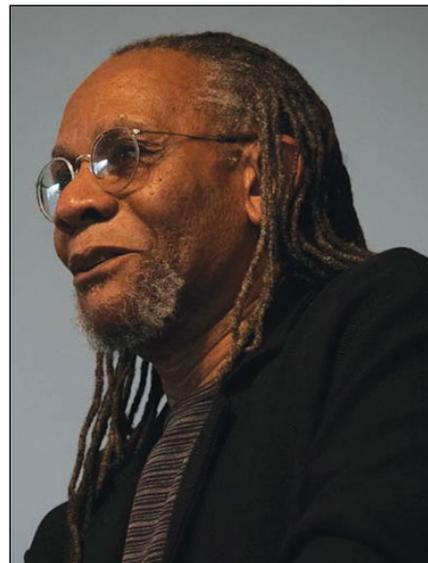
Your gift is tax deductible.

Friday, April 8, 2016

Inaugural Robert Creeley Lecturer, Nathaniel Mackey

Nathaniel Mackey is the Reynolds Price Professor of Creative Writing at Duke University and a Chancellor of the American Academy of Poets. His many books include *Nod House* (2011), *Splay Anthem* (2006), *Eroding Witness* (1966), and four volumes of an ongoing prose project titled *From A Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. He has won the National Book Award, the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, and the Bollingen Prize for American Poetry. In his lecture, "Breath and Precarity," Mackey traced connections between two aesthetic movements of the 1950s and '60s: innovations in free jazz by figures like Sonny Rollins, Cecil Taylor, and Charles Mingus, and the experimental poetry associated with Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. For both poets and jazz performers, breath was a material fact of composition—determining the length of the line or how long a note was sustained—and a metaphor for the "animal man," for the primal or primitive. Mackey compared, for example, the halting, asthmatic patterns of Creeley's reading style with the stuttering units of John Tchicai's performance of "Everything Happens to Me" with the New York Art Quartet. This turn to a more embodied poetics, Mackey argues, was a response to the trauma of the Vietnam war: "jittery times call for jittery measures." Also hovering through the lecture were Eric Garner's symbolically laden last words: "I can't breathe." Being aware of our breath, and the breath of others, modulating breath, having our breath taken away, catching our breath, finding the space to breathe are concerns that suture the contemporary moment to radical innovations of the 1960s and 1970s, and make clear the deep relevance of Buffalo's legacy of experimental poetics.

-- Sean Reynolds



Willy's Reading was followed by R. D. Pohl's announcement of the runner-ups and winner of the first UB English/Poetics & riverrun Poetry Prize. The winner, Kelly Swartz, is a senior at Nichols School. She has not yet decided what college she will attend in the fall, but she intends to be an English major. Her poem "How To Be A Black Girl," was a powerful demonstration of the talent among our young writers in Buffalo.

Nathaniel Mackey's lecture "Breath and Precarity" was followed by a brief session where anyone in the audience might read one of Creeley's poems and then by a reception. That evening, English & Poetics hosted a Community Poetry Reading at the Westminster Presbyterian Church Parrish Hall, which was attended by about fifty listeners and readers.

Photos on this page by Bruce Jackson / UB Distinguished Professor

REMEMBERING CREELEY

For the Inaugural Creeley Lecture and Celebration, we put together a pamphlet of shared remembrances of Creeley. This booklet is reproduced on the department's website (www.english.buffalo.edu) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/UBEnglish). Additional remembrances will be added to this site as they come in. Please feel free to add your own to our collection by writing to English-department@buffalo.edu

Saturday, April 9, 2016

Reunion

On April 9th, English department alums gathered in the Honors College to share memories, go back to the classroom with favorite professors, meet current students, and hear about recent developments in the department. There was a lively debate with current *Spectrum* editor Tom Dinki and *Spectrum* faculty adviser, Jody Kleinberg Biehl, about the state of college athletics; a conversation with new faculty about cross-cultural studies, science writing, and historical research; and a discussion with current students who are writing novels, running the English Club, working as tutors at the Center for Excellence in Writing, and generally enjoying the "life of the book." Professors David Schmid, Barbara Bono, and Bob Daly gave alums a taste of their current teaching interests, everybody ate and mingled in the Honors College's Don Shack Lounge, and several emeritus faculty showed up to visit with former students.



A highlight of the day was the presentation by distinguished alums Virginia Horvath, President of SUNY Fredonia, and Kevin Whalen, Senior Vice President at Morgan Stanley in Boston. Both spoke eloquently of the pleasures of their undergraduate literary studies and the insights into human psychology, the power of writing, and the complexity of the world that these made possible. They described the ways their English majors helped them to carve out challenging and rewarding working lives. Kevin, who helped found and volunteers at 826 Boston, a writing center for underserved students in Boston, also discussed his passion for helping young people to discover empowerment through writing.



At the end of the day, many alums joined attendees at the "Poetics: (The Next) 25 Years Conference" to hear alumna Elizabeth Willis and former UB faculty member Charles Bernstein speak and read their poetry. Many then enjoyed perusing the exhibit of Buffalo poetry publications in the Poetry Collection in Capen Hall.

As the day demonstrated, our graduates forge diverse and interesting paths for themselves beyond UB, exercising tremendous talent as writers, scholars, communicators, and organizers while continuing to cultivate their love of literature. Thanks to all of you who made the trip. We hope to see even more of you at the next reunion.



Photo by Hannah Milligan

Friday & Saturday, April 9-10, 2016

Poetics Conference

On April 9-10, "Poetics: (The Next) 25 Years" conference took place on UB's North Campus. The conference drew close to 250 poets and critics of contemporary poetry to Buffalo, with guests from not just the U.S. and Canada but Australia, Korea, France, Mexico and the UK.



Conference seminars:

The conference began on Saturday morning with eleven simultaneous seminars, on topics ranging from "Post-Crisis Militant Word" (convened by Brian Ang and Jeff Derksen) to "Active States: Transnation, Post-Nation, and New Relationships between the Global and the Local" (convened by Matthew Hall). For a complete list of all seminars and schedule for the conference, go to <https://poeticsthenext25years.wordpress.com/>. Below are some comments from current UB PhD students on seminars they attended:

Declan Gould & Jesse Miller: The "Somatics/Disability/Illness" seminar (convened by Petra Kupperts and Stephanie Heit) included a range of creative and critical projects relating to disability poetics, somatic poetics, dance/writing, trans shifts, bibliotherapy, and more. More than an opportunity to share

scholarly work, it was an experiment in the forms that academic community can take. In the weeks leading up to the conference, participants shared samples of their work and traded critical feedback, recommended new trajectories for revision, and developed linkages among projects. This mediated exchange was supplemented by a very different mode of engagement at the conference itself, where Kupperts and Heit guided participants in a somatic activity spanning the third floor of Clemens Hall. Participants breathed mindfully, brought their focus to the space, going to different parts of the room, touching, giving weight, circling, running, looking at other members, joining hands, and finding support in the material and immaterial structures of academia. This led to a discussion about embodiment, en-mindedness, and the spaces for rejuvenation built into each person's work. The balance between rigorous intellectual engagement and reflection on the importance of finding space for support in creative and critical work made this an extremely generative seminar.



George Life: As Joan Retallack said at the start of her seminar, "Poetic Interventions in Past and Future Contingents," we could have spent a lifetime discussing the questions raised by the nearly 20 submitted papers. Instead, we explored the possibilities of the abbreviated—freewriting together, making poetic lists out of discursive arguments, breaking into groups, and being mindful of our intense, momentary company.

Claire Nashar: In Megan Kaminsky and John Beer's seminar on "Contemporary Renovations in Lyric," the "lyric" we hauled in to rethink together was already an enlarged sense of lyric: the examples raised by seminar participants arrived as formally and stylistically porous texts, priming the ground for talk of the nexus between politics and materiality in contemporary lyric poetry.



Photos on this page by George Life

POETICS CONFERENCE

Friday & Saturday, April 9-10, 2016

Poetics Conference

Iven Luke Heister: In “Artists Who Write Objects,” artists and scholars from Art History, Poetics, and Literary Studies convened to discuss disciplinary borders and the current status of sites of presence, ruminating over the ethics of critical writing and expressing a collective hope of achieving critical writing that does not obscure the art object.

After the seminars, conference participants engaged in six panels, consisting of brief presentations, followed by open discussion. On Saturday afternoon, panels were followed by presentations and a reading by Charles Bernstein and Elizabeth Willis (Susan Howe and Dennis Tedlock unfortunately were not able to attend). Discussion continued at a reception and exhibition on “Poetry in the Making: The UB Poetics Program 1990-2015” in Special Collections, and then a buffet dinner and flash reading downtown in the sanctuary of Trinity Episcopal Church. Fifty-five readers participated—and the spirit throughout the three-hour event was intense, lively, and engaged. On Sunday, panels and discussion continued. The conference concluded after lunch, in the early afternoon. While it is impossible to summarize the many directions of thinking, presentation and performance of the conference, recurring threads included precarity, language/form, environmental/ecological/bio-political concerns, feminism, and endings. Many expressed before leaving their hope that this conference would function as the beginning of new conversations and directions in poetics and their sense that it was appropriate that such a conference and potential beginning would occur in Buffalo.



Photo by George Life

SHELLEY JACKSON - APRIL 18-19



Shelley Jackson's year as the WBFO Visiting Professor of the Arts ended on a high note on April 18 with a final Exhibit X Fiction reading. The salon at Professors Milletti and Anastasopoulos' house included a reading/performance of Jackson's new short story “Monosaurus” followed by an involved chat with undergraduate and graduate students from the department. Using words taken only from the first page of the *New York Times*, Jackson created an intriguing narrative about the monosaurus virus that affects the human race: “girls become men; men become mythic.” Innovative, witty, and surreal, Jackson's narrative acts as an invocation to the latent possibilities of language rather than imposing on language itself. The provocative story kept the audience in splits while fuelling a compelling discussion after the reading. Jackson admitted that her “Monosaurus” is “an act of hosting the emergence of a story rather than writing a story.” Sponsored by the Dean of the College of Art & Sciences, the exhilarating and riveting year with Shelley Jackson started with her Exhibit X Reading that served as the opening event of the Gender Institute Conference, “Wonder Women

& Super Men.” Her recurring visits to UB included her PLASMA talk on “the hand” for Media Study, visits to both graduate and undergraduate workshops and seminars in the English, Media Study, and Art Departments, and the 3-Day “Skin-Membrane-Habitat” Workshop at the new Coalesce Center for Biological Art. The year came full circle with this second Exhibit X reading that left students with intriguing new ways to deliberate about the production of and inquiry into fiction.

-- Shayani Bhattacharya



Thursday & Friday, April 14-15, 2016

Tom Toles



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In the photo below, Toles participates in an open discussion with, among others, English Department PhD student Andrew Dorkin, who is writing a dissertation on humor.



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Tom Toles (BA '73, *magna cum laude*), Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist for the *Washington Post*, came home to Buffalo in early April to be this year's artist honoree in UB's Signature Series.

Toles has received all the major awards a newspaper editorial cartoonist can win. In Japan, he would be called a National Treasure.

When Toles was getting his degree in the UB English Department and drawing for the *Spectrum*, the English Department and *Spectrum* were both on what is now called the "South Campus" of UB. The Department was housed in two linked metal sheds on Bailey Avenue and the *Spectrum* was in a second-floor suite of what is now part of the UB Dental School. It wasn't called the "South Campus" then because in those years, that was the entirety of UB, save for the Law School, which was located in a superb Louis Sullivan building (now the home of the Hodgson Russ law firm, which saved it from demolition) in downtown Buffalo.

The Signature Series celebrates UB people who have done major work in the arts. The first celebrant was SUNY Distinguished Professor and Birge-Cary Professor of Music David Felder. The Toles event was the first time the University reached off-campus to invite a UB graduate.

Toles began drawing for the *Spectrum* while still a high school student in Hamburg. His older brother was at UB and made the connection. The *Spectrum* editors at the time were smart enough to see that this high school kid was drawing better stuff than anyone they could find. When Tom came to UB, the relationship continued.

When he graduated, he was an artist, then political cartoonist for the *Buffalo Courier-Express* for almost a decade. After Warren Buffet drove the *Courier* into the ground, he was editorial cartoonist for the *Buffalo News* for almost twenty years. He then went to the *Washington Post*, succeeding the legendary Herbert Block, in 2002. He is now the most widely-syndicated editorial cartoonist in the world.

During his April visit here, Toles talked with people at the opening of an exhibition of his work (from the early *Spectrum* years to very recent *Washington Post* cartoons) that will be up in the Ka-veeshwar Gallery on the fifth floor of Capen Hall until mid-summer; he met with the *Spectrum* editorial board and did a presentation about his work at Slee Hall; and he took part in a symposium, "Humor in Political Commentary," in the Letro Courtroom at the UB Law School, moderated by Andy Stott (UB vice provost and dean of undergraduate education, and a member of the UB English Department).

Toles also plays drums with the rock band, Suspicious Package.

-- Bruce Jackson / UB Distinguished Professor