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Humanities Center

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University of Alabama in Huntsville

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Humanities Center

THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS



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Contact Us

Eric Smith

Director, Humanities Center
Associate Professor of English

uah.edu/la/research/humanities



Woven Weeds (2010)

This cyanotype on woven watercolor paper is a collaborative creation by
JOSÉ BETANCOURT and SUSAN WEIL.

Director's Message

Welcome



In a year that has seen the now-routine pronouncements of a "crisis" in the humanities achieve a shrill stridency and a grave self-assertion, it has been a most heartening privilege as the incoming Director of the UAH Humanities Center to observe firsthand the special contributions that humanistic inquiry continues to make in the daily life of our university culture and the wider Huntsville community. Following the initiative of our faculty

in the College of Liberal Arts and beyond, the Humanities Center provided support in 2013 for an array of public events, campus visitations by speakers of national and international prominence, innovative faculty research projects, and the acquisition of much-needed library materials. Such vibrant activity effectively bears out that while study in the humanities may sometimes yield an outcome neither instrumental nor predictable nor always immediate, its abiding value is far from diminished for all that. Indeed, as the following pages amply attest, among the foremost products of our discipline's labors is the substratum of community itself—the assumed, if unacknowledged, ground from which glib denunciations of the humanities are all too frequently made. As we undertake a productive and rewarding new year, it is inspiring to reflect on the contributions that our faculty and the Humanities Center have made toward the elaboration of such a community in the previous one.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eric Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E".

Eric Smith

Director, Humanities Center
Associate Professor of English

Humanities Center Steering Committee

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Associate Professor, English

Andrew Dunar

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Rolf Goebel

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& Literatures

Lillian Joyce

Associate Professor, Art & Art History

John Pottenger

Professor, Political Science

William Wilkerson

Professor, Philosophy

Library Grants

Anna Foy

English, materials on the British
restoration and 18th century
English literature

Christine Sears

History, materials on race and
African Americans, Prints, and
Caricatures in history

Chad Thomas

English, materials on Shakespeare

William Wilkerson

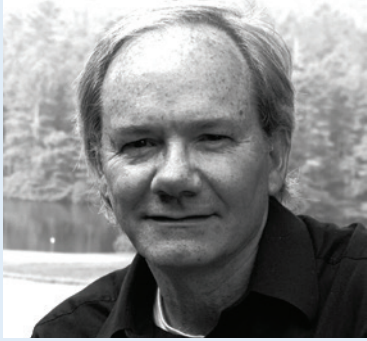
Philosophy, materials on European
and continental philosophy

Joseph Conway

English, materials on American
literary scholarship



EMINENT SCHOLARS



Allen Wier
Award-Winning Author

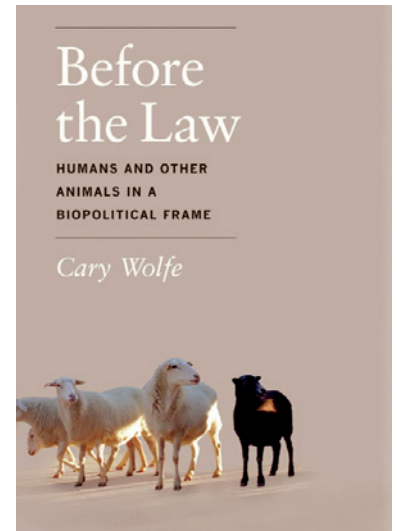
Wier, a professor of English at the University of Tennessee, had a week-long residency in the UAH English Department in September 2012. During that time, he presented lectures to the general public and the Honors College, gave a reading from his recently published novel *Tehano*, and visited a number of classes.

Mr. Wier is the award-winning author of four novels and a collection of short stories. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. At Tennessee since 1994, his distinguished academic career also includes serving 14 years as the Director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Alabama, as well as residencies at numerous colleges and universities.



Cary Wolfe
English Scholar

UAH's Department of English recently brought to campus as Eminent Scholar Dr. Cary Wolfe, Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English at Rice University, whose work is at the forefront of critical theory, broadly, and Biopolitics and Animal Studies, specifically, in Humanities and Science discourse. Dr. Wolfe's visit was made to coincide with the biennial Graduate Student Conference sponsored by the Department of English. This year's theme, "Reading Humans, Animals, and Machines in a Posthuman World," drew on Dr. Wolfe's work in what is termed the Posthumanities, a scholarly movement of the last thirty years that as Wolfe explains, "thinks fundamental social and cultural questions outside of or at least askance to the humanism that we have inherited in our philosophical habits, political institutions, cultural and religious conventions, and much else." The conference drew a number of graduate student researchers from colleges and universities across the country, as well as several English graduate students here at UAH. Dr. Wolfe offered a seminar to UAH students and faculty that examined sociologist Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theory, as well as anthropologist Gregory Bateson's work on ecologies of the mind. Dr. Wolfe's conference keynote, "Humans and Animals in a Biopolitical Frame," mapped out his most recent work, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago, 2012), which examines the shared sufferings of humans and animals in the current state of biopolitical rule of many of the world's governments. Dr. Wolfe has authored several other books including *What is Posthumanism?* (Minnesota, 2010) and *Animal Rites: The Discourse of Species and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, 2003), is editor of the University of Minnesota Press' Posthumanities book series, and is director of Rice's Center for Critical and Cultural Theory (3CT).





Tarik O'Regan

Music Scholar

Tarik O'Regan, Eminent Scholar in the humanities and UAH Music Department composer-in-residence, visited UAH the week of April 8, 2013. O'Regan (b. 1978), who most recently held positions at Trinity and Corpus Christi Colleges in Cambridge, grew up in London. He spent some of his childhood in Morocco, where his mother was born, and Algeria. Following the completion of his undergraduate studies at Pembroke College, Oxford, and private study with Jeremy Dale Roberts, he began serving as the classical recordings reviewer for The Observer newspaper, a position he held for four years. O'Regan then continued his postgraduate studies in composition under the direction of both Robin Holloway at Cambridge University, where he was appointed composer-in-residence at Corpus Christi College, and Robert Saxton.

Mr. O'Regan also visited the campus of UAH the year prior, when Dr. Erin Colwitz of the UAH Music Department conducted the U.S. premiere of his work for chorus and orchestra, *Martyr*. The fruits of that relationship resulted in a new arrangement of O'Regan's most famous work, *Triptych*; Dr. David Ragsdale arranged the choral-orchestral work for chorus and wind band. Dr. Colwitz conducted the premiere of that piece on April 12, 2013, at First Baptist Church in Huntsville, performed by the UAH Choirs and Wind Ensemble, with Mr. O'Regan in attendance. While here, Mr. O'Regan presented a lecture on his opera, *Heart of Darkness*. He also spent time with a few UAH student composers and met with both choirs as they prepared some of his other works.



R. Brandon Kershner

English Scholar

An Alumni Professor in the Department of English at the University of Florida, R. Brandon Kershner visited UAH as a Humanities Center short-term eminent scholar in early March, 2013. Author of four scholarly monographs and more than 50 essays and articles on modern British literature, Kershner helped pioneer the study of popular culture in the literary works of James Joyce, and his methods have had far-ranging effects on scholarship on early twentieth-century literature and culture. Kershner gave a public lecture on "Joyce and Intertextuality," which included a brief intellectual history of the latter term, and an Honors Forum presentation on "Popular Culture in Joyce Studies." For students in Dr. Eric Smith's graduate seminar, he lectured on the thought of Russian philosopher and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, and, also a widely published poet, he visited with Anna Weber's creative writing students.



Duane McDiarmid

"Directions in Sculpture"



In April 2013 Professor Duane McDiarmid of Ohio University delivered a series of public lectures at UAH entitled *Directions in Sculpture* concerning feminism, the pedestrian, and artistic dissemination—each conceived as pointed interventions in our understanding of developments in contemporary sculpture. McDiarmid also met informally with UAH students and

professors for further discussion, even finding time to undertake a collaborative project with students in which he modeled his artistic approach, a certain immanently critical speculation directed toward the complexities of contemporary culture. As McDiarmid remarks, "I am a participant, a part of all the problems of my culture." McDiarmid states that he relishes "wearing the costume of the unclear," that his art seeks the "abracadabra state" that produces between artist and viewer a collaborative insight into the conundrums of the present. His recent projects have focused on social intersections where new technologies impact and reveal cultural values and the social architecture of personal belief. Using a lens more shamanistic than scientific McDiarmid searches for common denominators that integrate comprehensive natural systems, social issues, and personal experiences.

Benito del Pliego

Spanish Poet

Spanish poet, Dr. Benito del Pliego, visited UAH in September 2012 for a series of lectures and public engagements centered on contemporary Spanish poetry. As a part of his residency, Dr. del Pliego presented a public lecture on his work, *Indice*, the text of which is the subject of a musical composition which was performed by UAH Music Department Faculty during his residency. Professors Rolf Goebel and Linda Maier of the Foreign Languages Department presented Dr. del Pliego to the Spanish Club and several Spanish courses during his three-day residency.

Feminist activist Lesléa Newman appears on campus

With the support of the Humanities Center, the UAH Women's Studies Program brought feminist writer, poet, and human rights activist Lesléa Newman to campus in November 2013 for two public lectures. A prolific writer of adult and children's publications, Newman is the author of more than 60 books, including *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*; *Hachiko Waits*; *Eating Our Hearts Out: Personal Accounts of Women's Relationship to Food*; *Still Life With Buddy*; *A Sweet Passover*; and her best-known children's book, *Heather Has Two Mommies*.

Newman gave a keynote lecture entitled "He Continues to Make a Difference: The Story of Matthew Shepard." In 1998, when Newman arrived at The University of Wyoming (UW) to give a speech, she found a devastated college campus and community. Six days prior to Newman's visit, Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay student at UW was kidnapped, robbed, beaten, tied to a fence, and left to die. Shepard was found the next day, taken

to a hospital, and remained in a coma for five days until he died. Newman's book, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*, tells the story of the impact of Matthew's murder in poems. Newman read from *October Mourning* and also used her address to promote tolerance, understanding, and an acceptance of diversity. Newman gave a second presentation, geared specifically to students, called "The Gender Dance: Picture Books that Challenge Stereotypes," as part of the UAH Honors Lecture Series.

Supporters for Newman's visit included the Office of Student Affairs (as part of its SafeZone program), the Office of Diversity, the Honors College, POWER (the Women's Studies student organization), the UAH Gay-Straight Alliance, and the Student Sociological Association. Community partners were the Alabama Writer's Forum, the Interfaith Mission Service, the Interweave group of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Huntsville, GLBT Advocacy and Youth Services, and Temple B'nai Sholom.



Johnson continued his research with a summer trip to Europe in 2013.

DAVID JOHNSON, Associate Professor of Global Studies and German, conducted research in libraries and archives in Germany and Poland during the summer of 2013. The goals of the research trip were twofold. First, Dr. Johnson continued his research on the changing representations of the exiled Polish author Josef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-1887) in Dresden. This project explores how different political regimes in Dresden in three eras (nineteenth-century imperial Germany, the German

Democratic Republic, and today's reunified Germany) each commodify Kraszewski's Polish ethnic identity for varying ends and, in so doing, reveal the changing character of German-Polish relations over the last 150 years. Second, Dr. Johnson conducted initial research in the Polish cities of Wrocław, Gliwice, and Warsaw to explore the parameters of a new research project on German-Polish dialogues about contested regions that were once German and, after World War II, became Polish.

LILLIAN JOYCE spent three weeks at the American Academy in Rome. In its spectacular McKim, Mead, and White-designed complex, the Academy hosts a variety of visiting artists and scholars throughout the year. During her visit Lillian had 24-hour access to the Academy's excellent library on classical studies. She also had an opportunity to visit several museums in Rome that contained objects that were integral to her projects. By the conclusion of her productive stay she had completed the bulk of the text for a presentation she will give at the Feminist Art History Conference in Washington, DC, in November, and she sent off an article-length manuscript, "Roma and the Virtuous Breast," for review by a journal.

JOSEPH CONWAY, Assistant Professor of English, received funding from the UAH Humanities Center to spend a month in Worcester, Mass., looking at samples of both genuine and spurious nineteenth-century U.S. currency, while also reading anti-counterfeiting materials published by antebellum journalists and businessmen. In the pre-Civil-War United States, there were over 10,000 different kinds of paper money. Most of the coin in circulation was foreign. Almost half of the currency supply was counterfeit. Dr. Conway's research investigates how antebellum authors represent this complex and often absurd money system in novels, poems, autobiographies, and slave narratives. In doing so, he is interested in the ways economic and aesthetic discourses get strangely entangled with one another in works by writers like Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and William Wells Brown. This research project is part of an in-progress book manuscript that will focus on how the heterogeneous nature of the antebellum currency system became a metaphor for American writers to think about social, racial, and political multiplicities in the ever-fracturing Republic.



Humanities Center Sponsored Scholarship AY 2012-2013

ANGELA BALLA: Respondent, "Donne and Others" Session, *The 28th Annual John Donne Society Conference*, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, February 2013; and "Toward a Poetics of Toleration in the Long Eighteenth Century," Closed Colloquium on Religious Toleration, *American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS)*, Cleveland, OH, April 2013.

DIANA BELL: "Trailblazers: Universal Instructional Design in Tutoring" Association for the Tutoring Profession National Conference Atlanta, GA, March 2013.

ANDY CLING: "A Minimal Schema for Endless Regress Paradoxes;" and Comments on Allan Coates' "Directions of Fit," Tennessee Philosophical Association Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN, November 10, 2012.

ANNE MARIE CHOUP: "Competing Causes? The Tension Between Campaigns To Eradicate Domestic Violence And Campaigns To Eradicate Violence Against Women" Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 11, 2013.

JOE CONWAY: "'Stephen Burroughs: The Criminal as Public Spirit," American Historical Association, New Orleans, LA, January 2013; and "Bound By Sound: Poe and the Captivating Voice of

Ideology," "Captivity Writing Unbound" at the University of South Alabama, Fairhope, AL, October 2012.

MONICA DILLIHUNT: "Hearing is Believing: Reading for Success" American Education Research Association Annual Conference San Francisco, CA, April, 2013.

ANNA FOY: "'To flatter Knaves or lose his Pension': Edward Young and the Limitations of Biographical Taxonomy," East-Central / American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, November 3, 2012; and "'To flatter Knaves or lose his Pension': Edward Young and the Limitations of Biographical Taxonomy," East-Central / American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD, November 3, 2012.

ALANNA FROST: "Powwows, Prisons, and Pedagogies: Reinvigorating the (Counter) Public Work of Composition" Conference on College Composition and Communication. Las Vegas, NV. March 15, 2013; and "The ESL Label: 'Why burden him with that?'" Thomas R. Watson Conference in Rhetoric and Composition. Louisville, KY, October 19, 2012.

ROLF GOEBEL: "Schrift, Bild, Ton: Benjamin zwischen Hölderlin und Digitalkultur" Thirty-Sixth Annual Conference of the German Studies Assoc., Milwaukee, WI, October 5, 2012.

DEBORAH HEIKES: Comments on Anna Bergqvist's "Thick Concepts and Context Dependence," Southwestern Philosophical Society, New Orleans, LA, November 2012.

DAVID JOHNSON: "Dresden as Border City? German-Polish Encounters in the Nineteenth-Century City" German Studies Association Annual Conference, Milwaukee, WI, October 2012.



LILLIAN JOYCE: "The Limited Influence of the Hadrianic Cult Statue on Images of Roma" Archaeological Institute of America Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, January 2013.

LESLIE KAIURA: "Don Juan, Meet Doña Emilia: Teaching 'El encaje roto' as a Reversal of *El Conde Lucanor's* Exemplum XXXV" Florida International University Symposium: Spanish and Latin-American Women Writers from the Enlightenment to Hispanic *Modernismo*, Miami, FL, March 29-30, 2013; and

"A Skills-Based Approach to Teaching Professional Spanish," American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas, July 8-11, 2013.

LINDA MAIER: "A Female Voice of the Generation of 1927: Images and Motifs in the Poetry of Josefina de la Torre," Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, University of Kentucky, 2013.

EVAN RAGLAND: "Medicine and Early Modern Philosophy, 'A Mutual Divide'" History of Science Society Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, November 2, 2012; and "Making Trials in Sixteenth and Early-Seventeenth Century Medicine: On the History of Experiment from Medicine to Science" 4th Bucharest Colloquium in Early Modern Science, Bucharest, Romania, May 12, 2013.

ERIC SMITH: "There's No Splice Like Home: Domesticity, Difference, and the Long Space of Short Fiction in Vandana

Singh's *The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet*" The Society for Utopian Studies Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada, October 5, 2012.

PAVICA SHELDON: "The Culturally Defined Basis of Learning" Southern States Communication Association, Louisville, KY, April 2013; and "You did what? The communication of forgiveness in married and dating couples" Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, London, England, June 2013.

DAVID STEWART: "Remembering Contemporary Art's Post-Apocalyptic Decade" Southeastern College Art Association Conference, Durham, NC, October, 2012.

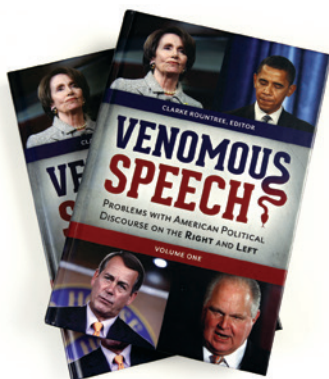
CHAD THOMAS: "Staging Queerness in the Tempest" Renaissance Society of America, San Diego, April 2013; and "Shakespeare, Radical Drag and

the Citizens' Theatre" Shakespeare Association of America, Toronto, Canada, March 2013.

WOLFRAM VERLAAN: "The Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension in the 21st Century: Developmental or Environmental?" Annual Conference of the Literacy Research Association, San Diego, CA, December 1, 2012.

RYAN WEBER: "Assessing Popular Science in Social Media" Conference of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, Las Vegas, NV, March 13, 2013.

BILL WILKERSON: "Taking the Ontological Road all the Way: Merleau-Ponty's Living Body as a Plurality of Forces." Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Rochester, NY, November 2012.



CLARKE ROUNTREE: "Reversing Course: Supreme Court Overruling in an Early Admiralty Case," "A Burkean Call to COMMunity: Addressing the Barnyard Wrangle," and "The View from Middle Management: A Rock above, A Hard Place below." National Convention of the National Communication Association, Orlando, FL, November 2012; and "Toward the Next Phase in Pentadic Scholarship: Theorizing, Applying, and Extending Burke's Grammar of Motives" Conference on Rhetoric as Equipment for Living, Ghent, Belgium, May 2013.



A LOOK BACK AT A LIFE IN HUMANITIES

Memoir essay from Daniel Schenker, Chair of English



I STILL HAVE A YEARBOOK PRODUCED BY KIDS AT A SUMMER CAMP I ATTENDED WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN, WHICH INCLUDED A "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT." ONE CAMPER, WHO WORE WHITE PANTS ALL THE TIME AND HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A GIRL FROM NEW JERSEY, WAS LEFT A WHITE PANTS FACTORY IN BAYONNE. THE GIRL FROM NEW JERSEY WAS GIVEN A ONE-WAY TICKET TO PORT CHESTER, HER NEW BOYFRIEND'S HOME. A SKINNY KID WAS LEFT NINE POUNDS; A GUY WHO SANG IN THE SHOWER ALL THE TIME, A RECORDING CONTRACT; A GIRL WHOSE CLOTHES ALWAYS GAVE OFF A DISTINCTIVE AROMA, A JOINT.

What did they leave me? A computer.

People are surprised when I tell them this, and I'm a little surprised myself, but as far back as I can remember, I was a science kid. Somewhere out in deep space there's a television transmission of me on Romper Room showing my butterfly collection. I assembled dozens of model ships and planes, and later on built transistor radios and other simple electronic

devices. One year I badgered my family until they bought me a rather expensive telescope, because I was going to be an astronomer.

No one in my family cared much about science, so I think it was mainly the Zeitgeist. I grew up in the glory days of the Space Race, and I remember watching (when I was home from school) the wall-to-wall coverage of the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions, back when every space shot riveted the nation's attention. It was there, by the way, that I first heard about Huntsville, Alabama.

How odd, then, to have moved to Huntsville years later to teach English instead of to build rockets.

Again, I credit the times. The 1960s were also the decade of social and political upheaval—Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, assassinations, the Summer of Love, riots in the streets, Woodstock, and so on. Too young to participate, I was nonetheless fascinated by these remarkable events and wanted to know more about them. Then life itself grew more complicated and vexed, as happens when one passes from childhood into maturity.

By my freshman year of college I had basically decided that people were more interesting than things, and after brief forays into history and political science (two compelling academic disciplines, to be sure), I settled upon English, because for me nothing better captures what it means to be human than a well-crafted work of poetry or fiction. I had assumed that I would go on to law school (my fam-

ily wanted me to get a good job), but by my senior year I realized that I had only scratched the surface of literature, and I made the more or less fateful decision to attend graduate school instead.

I'm acutely aware of how lucky I've been in turning an irresistible curiosity into a rewarding career. A typical narrative in Romanticism is the experience of being disappointed in acquiring the thing you always wanted, but I've been very satisfied with my semesters of teaching texts and writing about them. While no one can read everything, I've read a lot of what I wanted to, from Homer to Harry Potter, and had the chance to talk about it with some very bright students and colleagues.

Of course, the minute you tell someone that you're majoring in English, you can expect to hear, "Well, what are you going to do with that?" My answer, it turned out, was to keep on doing it. But there are lots of other things one might do, and strictly speaking, there's nothing stopping an English major from doing anything at all.

Indeed, sometimes I think to myself how neat it would have been to have majored in English, and then gone on to become an astronomer or an engineer. A life in the humanities can be a good thing, but equally good is the humanities in a life. A recent study published in the journal, *Science* found that reading literature, as opposed to reading non-fiction, pulp fiction, or nothing at all, enhanced empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence. The humanities, it turns out,

"A recent study published in the journal, *Science*, found literature, as opposed to reading non-fiction, pulp fiction, or nothing at all, enhanced empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence."

actually help to make us, well, humane. So what I've told students all these years as we set out to read *The Odyssey* or *Hamlet* or *Ulysses* together has now been validated by empirical data. Thanks, *Science*--better late than never.

I'm still interested in people and books, but I confess that as I complete my 30th year teaching English at UAH, I'm hearing the siren song of things. I'm building model airplanes again (my grade-schooler son wants to be a jumbo jet pilot), and I'm thinking about buying another telescope. Maybe after all that metaphor and metonymy and allegory and ambiguity I just want things to be simple for a while. Simple, and humane.

301 Sparkman Drive
 Huntsville, Alabama 35899

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS/HUMANITIES CENTER CHAPBOOK PROJECT



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When poet Kelly Cherry visited UAH as a Humanities Center Eminent Scholar, she undertook collaboration with printmaker Michael Crouse, whose work seemed to capture in an entirely different medium what Cherry attempted to express in her poetry. Cherry and Crouse began work on a small volume that would include Cherry's poetry and Crouse's artwork. With the support of private donor Mrs. Julian Johnson and the Humanities Center, the Cherry and Crouse collaboration *Welsh Table Talk* was produced in special edition. Designed and hand bound by John Paul Greenwald and Stephen L. Vanilio of the Book Arts Conservatory in Washington, DC, the chapbook is made entirely of archival materials designed to last at least 300 years. The leather binding of both the chapbook and the box that contains it is Italian calfskin. The interior of the chapbook is letterpress printed on fabiano rusticus art paper by the printer for the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. Interspersed among Cherry's poems are six etchings by Michael Crouse. Also included is a folder containing three loose (frameable) etchings by Crouse. The box, chapbook, and folder together comprise a beautifully integrated art object.

The College of Liberal Arts and the Humanities Center at The University of Alabama in Huntsville invite you to acquire *Welsh Table Talk*, a handsomely designed, limited-edition chapbook. Your contribution to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Excellence Fund will support scholarships, innovative projects within the College, and the creative and scholarly work of students and faculty.