Humanitas

Medical University of South Carolina
Volume XIII
2009
Dear Readers,

Thank you for your interest in Volume XIII of Humanitas. The Medical University of South Carolina has been lucky to have had a vehicle like Humanitas for 13 years now to encourage reflections and expression, which may otherwise go unnoticed, from all members of our community. Despite the ominous issue number, this year’s publication has been more than fortunate in many respects. From the ground up, this issue is a bigger production than we have been able to support in years past.

To begin, we received an unprecedented 153 submissions this year, for which the staff of Humanitas would like to thank each and every student, faculty, and staff member who submitted. As a result of the heightened interest, we have been able to expand the issue to more completely represent the myriad talents found across campus. However, even with 10 outstanding judges on staff, we have had to make some hard decisions. To those whose submissions are not included this year, please do not be discouraged! Every submission was wonderful in its own right, and we urge you to continue creating and submitting.

I would like to thank the MUSC Humanities Committee, composed of dedicated folks from on campus and throughout the Charleston area, who have dedicated their time and energies to ensuring that Humanitas succeeds, and that the humanities flourish on our campus. It is vital to the work that we perform on campus that we never lose sight of why we are on this campus -- to better the lives of our fellow man and woman.

Finally, I would like to thank four members of the Humanities Committee in particular. This year, Dr. Paul Rousseau offered to reward the best efforts in three categories of submission. Spurred by his generosity, Kristi Rodgers-Cishek, Carol Lancaster, and Tom Waldrep decided to lend their patronage and help craft the awards in their final form of $200 for each winner in four categories. On the following page, please join us in congratulating the four inaugural winners of the Humanitas Awards for Creative Excellence.

Sanford Zeigler
For Excellence In Poetry: "Thank you, Man"
  John Korman
  College of Medicine

For Excellence In Prose: "The Hawk & the Flycatcher"
  Charles Brown.
  Library

For Excellence In Photography: "Hope In A Dry Land"
  Jason Curry
  College of Medicine

For Excellence In Visual Art, Non-Photographic: "Dog"
  Kate Humphries
  College of Health Professions
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Literary Selections are indicated by regular type.
Visual Selections are indicated by Italic type.

Cover image "Gulf Fritillary" by Hope Friar
Thank You, Man

Yesterday
my last day
on the wards
I found a
new courage:
gratitude
in the face
of a pain
I cannot
imagine

His reed-thin frame
withering yet
undefeated
by infections
amputations
ulcerations
isolation
hand, leg, fingers
lost, but with joy
that filled his room

I woke him
so early
to touch and
auscultate
what was left
he still grinned
ear-to-ear
and chuckled
so thankful
that it hurt

Before I left
for vacation
one final time
to say goodbye
forever like
I had promised
“Thank you, man,” he
whispered warmly
“You kept your word”
no, sir, thank you

John Korman
College of Medicine

Winner - 2009 Humanitas Prize for
Excellence in Poetry
Hope In A Dry Land

Jason A. Curry
College Of Medicine

Winner - 2009 Humanitas Prize for Excellence in Photography
Curious - Leh, India

Mary Barter

College of Medicine
I was disking a harvested, terraced wheat field on a hot July day in Oklahoma. Disking a field turns under all the stubble that a wheat combine leaves after harvest. As I went over the edge of a terrace, a jackrabbit sprang up and began running along the edge of the terrace towards the left. I saw ahead of the rabbit a red-tailed hawk sitting on the terrace. It looked like a collision and lunch was going to happen.

I stopped the big John Deere tractor to watch “nature, red in tooth and claw…” When I stopped, everyone stopped, and the hawk grew nervous. The large hawk clumsily tried to lift into the air seeking a thermal that would take him higher. Out of the sun a scissor-tailed flycatcher dove at the hawk’s head. The larger bird ducked and swerved to avoid repeated attacks on its head. I watched in amazement as the smaller flycatcher swooped in again and again.

Time shifted.

(The loaded bomber raced down the runway preparing to lift into the air. A fighter dove from above and hammered the bomber’s nose. The bomber staggered and the fighter circled to continue its attack. One of the bomber’s engines was trailing smoke as the two aircraft disappeared over the tree line.)

The red tail hawk and scissor-tailed flycatcher reached a point of separation and they parted safely.

The jackrabbit and I looked at each other and grinned. He left to seek shelter and shade. I started the large, green tractor and continued to prepare the field for a future crop while musing at the wonder of it all.

**Charles Brown**

*Library*

*Winner - 2009 Humanitas Prize for Excellence in Prose*
Dog

Kate Humphries

College of Health Professions
Driving Home From The Grocery Store

Driving home from the grocery store with $200 worth of groceries in my trunk.

My mind begins to wander over what bills need to be paid, did I RSVP to that party?, money’s tight right now, I really need more work clothes, I need to finish that project at work this week, did I send Pam a birthday card?, what am I going to fix for dinner tonight?, what color are we going to paint the guest room, damn — I forgot to pick up that prescription.

And then a guy on a motorcycle pulls out ahead of me.
And I am instantly young again.
The wind tearing through me like freedom itself.
Flying.
And I suddenly miss the days of youth,
those years between being a kid and
being an adult.
Starting the night out at 11 p.m. instead
of being asleep by then.
Having $16 in my bank account, without
any care.
Drinking vodka-spiked grape Kool-Aid
with my roommates in my dorm.
Feeling like the whole world was open to me.
Indestructible.
Ordering fins from Sharky’s at 2:00 in the morning.
Before bills,
before work,
before responsibility.
When I could climb onto the back of
my boyfriend’s motorcycle, and just go.

Aimee Strohecker
Pediatrics

Facing Page: Winner - 2009 Humanitas Prize for Excellence in Visual Art, non-Photographic
Shotgun Wedding

In this land of ninety-ninth floor drinks
And no land at all, where my smile is a secret
To the millions, I was stunned to bear witness
To a shotgun wedding.

He, the troubled soul whose eyes, if ever uplifted,
Looked through sandstorms, bracing against
Sun, whipping sand, whirled aimlessly through
A peopled desert of solitary souls;
And she, a widow, mother of two,
Victor once over the same cancer that strangled her mother;
Her soul survived but her heart did not.

While she fought her early death
He coldly pursued his own.
The only star he named in his overclouded sky
Was the cold comfort of early twilight.
But his betrothed, the threatened she-wolf, clawed for life.
For love? She had not yet loved them enough.

Each took pains with future-perfect verbiage:
Epistles from the grave to those who will have lived.
All hope abandoned, the boy pulled the trigger with his toe;
And with a muffled crack like a rib pulled from flesh,
The ceremony began.

The boy was found, breathing but hopeless,
Functional only in the most archaic sense of the word.

They exchanged vows.
He, by force of shotgun, with no concern
For self or other, would give his heart
To have and to hold, forever and ever, amen.
And she pledged consent.
Machines, they breathed and beat when she could not,  
Leaving cold silence for life’s ever-present iamb.

There would be no church bells, only organs,  
Ticks and clicks of pacers, and the rhythmic  
Artificial tones of hospital monitors.  
The surgeon, frocked in sterile blue, and his deacons  
Bedecked in the linens and caps of their offices,  
Performed their ceremony in 5 hours, according to official record.

In short, the woman’s dying heart was excised  
Sheared from its stalks with the cold precision of steel,  
(which, in another situation, would be typed “serial”)  
All except the left atrium, which remained, opened.

It was here the boy was joined to her,  
Here was sutured together the vessel of life,  
That most Holy of liqueurs, unwillingly willed  
From an imperfect stranger to another  
That she might perfect her future.  
A scissor snipped the final suture.

Slowly the heart warmed.  
The organ crescendoed triumphantly.

It was the only act of love I have seen  
In this anonymous land of no land  
And ninety-ninth floor drinks:  
Two hearts joined as one in unison and harmony,  
As long as they both shall live.  
Forever and ever, amen.

Sanford Zeigler  
College of Medicine
The Mighty Rubicon

The Rubicon
is a thin brook
bled from the Apennines,
forded daily
to and fro
by barefoot laborers.
Only Caesar crossed it but once,
the seventeen months it took
to snuff Pompey,
a process whose outcome
made a rivulet
Mighty.

Any who today cross
the Mighty Rubicon
do so feet dry
in the blink of an eye
and need know
nothing of geography nor history,
only the stir of transit,
something at stake.

Against the gross indifference of
Nature,
nature’s scarcely-tamable
obscurities
happily collide,
forming august conspiracies which,
through grace of vagrant fortune,
escape some trifling niche
to turn riotous, transforming
an empire or
a solitary heart.
Each is an act
achieved but once,
its minutiae married to the belittle
of history,
but
its prowess instructually
promiscuous, making
the obscure,
Mighty;
the process of Mighty,
fordable;
its outcome,
exacting.

Richard Hoyland
Outcomes and Quality Management
Faded Glory

Jason A. Curry

College of Medicine
I stood at the head, where,
In our country,
An anesthesiologist would ordinarily
Have taken up position.
Her body was draped in a graying sheet
But her fact was uncovered so that
She could look down into her viscera,
Which she would at some point do,
Only by accident.

These were doctors trained for surgery,
Forced to commit butchery;
It’s often the same story:
Questionable government provides
Questionable resources.
My first day in the operating theater
The surgeon admonished me for wasting
One square of gauze,

Then told every other doctor and nurse
What I had done so that the shame
Permeated as fully as the blood
Of my first hysterectomy
Seeping through Goodwill scrubs
They didn’t like it any more than I did,
A belly filleted open, blood filling up
The bowl of another open abdomen.
The windows were ajar
For hopeless relief of the choking air
In the unfinished concrete octagonal room,
Temperatures approaching three digits
While flies floated in on yawned breezes
And took up the sanguine buffet.

I stood at the head, and took her face
Between my hands,
One epidural and a relaxant
All they could spare against the sensations
Of skin being split, organs wrenched,
Fascia tearing like spider webs.

As the scalpel made its first descent,
She began to sing, something of a hymn.
I only knew because of the occasional
“Yay-soo” distinguishing itself from between
The Swahili still falling short
On my unlearned ears.
It was the only time in that country
I ever felt gratitude
Towards damned colonialist religion.
A War Song

I never drew a sword
Or felt his sweating flesh
Beneath my hands.
I did not wrestle to the ground an enemy
Intent on slitting my throat.

It’s not fair, this war.

I didn’t even get to draw a bead,
Sight him down my gun.
Never got to see him
Before light and noise and heat
Washed over me.
A tornado lover’s touch.

Where’s the glory?
Where’s the warrior’s song?
The answer to the call?
Thor’s hammer, Mars’ spear,
My mother’s Pride?

Do I have to find it for myself?
Try to fashion out a reason
Made up from bits and pieces of songs & legends,
Poems & books?

Something to speak to me.
Will me to lift my gun
And hunt again.

Cam Poston

STNICU
Hannah On Approach

Richard Hoyland

Outcomes And Quality Management
I’ve seen movies where brain children of the scientific revolution scoff at wizards of eras gone by. At turning lead into gold. Or horseradishes into diamonds. Maybe that’s all bullshit, but I’ve seen magic. I’ve seen hasty scratch pad musings metamorph through the typed page and into changing lives. I’ve heard the rabble and scrape of tuned strings become lumps and swallows in and of throats that will learn to sing. I’ve found relief in recycled trees and my own pen. My faith is in magic. And neither split molecules nor thirsty crusaders will tear that from me.

Matthew Dettmer
College of Medicine
Katrina’s Song

Caroline Norment
Pediatric Neurology
How unlikely, this relaxed retirement morning,
   A little green ink from a ball-point pen
Propels me back to a crisp autumn day,
   My first day of private practice.
It’s 1953: I’m in a small suburban office
   With a single nurse-assistant
Presiding over a waiting room of
Crying infants, anxious new mothers,
   A lone, nervous dad,
Waiting to see and test
   “The new young doctor.”
In my hand the topmost patient’s
   4 by 6 lined index card
With the departed senior doc’s handwritten minute ciphers
   …in green ink…
Distinct from nurses’ script
For height, weight, immunizations.

“What Next?” I thought,
Here comes day one, on my own.
A far cry from two years in the
Public health service, doing infectious diseases,
   An even farther cry
From white-coated residency days
In the pristine teaching hospital.

This was a different world…
Fee for service: five dollars a visit,
Two extra for a shot, ten for a house call,
   Fifteen for newborn nursery…
Cash only, an occasional check.

How would I manage?
How to cope with no business-savvy?
How to answer, at day’s end,  
A young wife, in a flowered apron,  
Holding our dimpled smiling infant,  
At the open apartment door,

“How did it go, hon?”

How did it go?  
I recall… green ink and all…  
“I did my best, dear,  
I did my best.”

**Stan Schuman**  
*Retired*

---

**Lady Elly of Great Sutton**

**Robert Hosker**  
*College of Medicine*
Alone

Bridget Hinkebein
Public Safety
The paradigm of this paradox
Is from Pandora’s Box
My slander, vanity and lies
Have ruined my insides
Now envy, greed and pining
Coat my inner lining
The truth of the situation
Is not a new creation
But a repetition
Somewhat of a tradition
With you and I.

So here I sit and write this
down
Verb, adjective, and noun
A declaration of independence
266 days of attendance
The length of my sobriety
The removal of a monster from society
Since I have partaken in that sin
That was the stimulus of the end
Of you and I.

I ask God for redemption
But not exemption
For what I have done
Battles that I have lost and won
I need serenity
To accept my identity
And recognize things I can change
But some are not in my range
And the wisdom to know the contrast
In the present, future, and past
I know this is very cursory
Almost to the anniversary
Beyond you and I.

I have yet to find solace or strength
My peace is at an arm’s length
My sleep is troubled and dark
My life is bare and stark
But I am proud in the reality
Of my morality and mortality
Waiting for one to falter
Then back to the altar
On my knees to pray
Strength for one more day
After you and I.

Zachary Wade Sutton
Rehabilitation Sciences
Worth the Drive

Colin Crowe
College of Medicine
“I Crawl Into Bed...”

I crawl into the bed as silently as silk.
    I don’t want to wake him.
    I move toward him,
    and finally lay my head
on that soft space between his shoulders
    and chest.

    It’s as if God himself
    made that spot just for me.
    I drape my arms around his chest,
    and, though deeply asleep, he wraps
    his arms about me in turn.
    Instinct.

    Before him, I never knew this place existed.
    This love, this light.
    I tilt my head up,
    Kissing him softly on his neck.
    And slowly melt into sleep.

Aimee Strohecker
Pediatrics
Female Form

Jane Anne Sweeny
College of Nursing
Ghosts

Almost asleep
She moved into that half-space
Between what isn’t
And what is

To what could be.

Half-shadows, she said to her-
self
When they flitted around a
corner
Or hovered at a door.

Hello, she half-whispered
To whatever might be there
Breathing softly in her ear.

Half-awake she lied
In twilight sleep,
Waiting for a slight movement
At the foot of her bed.

Half-expecting,
Hoping,
It would be her Mom.

Cam Poston
STNICU

Solitude

Bridget Hinkebein

Public Safety
Atrial Fibrillation

Be still little bird,
    Your fluttering wings in my heart cause concern.
Be still little bird,
    Your fluttering wings in my heart make me nervous.
Be still little bird,
    Your fluttering wings in my heart make me look to the horizon for a storm.
Be still little bird,
    Your fluttering wings in my heart are a portent of dread.
Be still little bird,
    Stop your fluttering in my heart and be quiet.
Be still little bird,
    We shall both be at peace some day.

Charles Brown
Library

Wyoming

Michael Humeniuk College of Medicine
“Get in your room!” I hear my father yell. It amuses me to think I can still remember the time when I flinched at that. I heard him yell a lot since then. You get used to things.

This time I can ignore it because the yell is directed toward my little brother. It’s not fair, but in a way, I guess, my brother deserves a scolding. Maybe. I don’t know. Really, if he doesn’t know the basics rules of survival, it’s his own fault.

The rules are simple.

You accept Dad as the ultimate authority. You keep your voice down and do as told. You apologize for your actions, even when you’re not at fault. You don’t argue or talk back, ever. Not even if you have an open mind, and your father just called someone the n-word. If you call him out on it, he’ll tell you he has black friends and he’s not racist. When he talks about homosexuals in a degrading way, and you call him out on it, he’ll tell you he has friends who are like that, he is not a homophobe.

Really, he’s a great Dad. He goes hunting and fishing with his friends, and takes my brother along. I consider myself a little too old or too busy. Maybe I think I’m too close to snapping at him. I don’t know.

He goes to baseball games and promises everything. Just don’t ask for anything when at the store. He will tell you that we have no money to waste on useless things. But he will buy himself an expensive tin can of popcorn.

And now he’s yelling at my little brother for not listening. I can hear my brother’s voice, arguing with him, but Dad’s louder. I guess it’s the loudness that decides everything. No wonder I could
never win. I can’t even say “Hi” to my friends loudly enough to be heard. I’m nowhere near the yelling level.

My dad stopped screaming, and it’s peaceful now. Seemingly. I drink my tea. I wonder if I should go console my brother, but I don’t think I will. This war is one-on-one. Besides, even if I said something about the rules, he wouldn’t follow them. My brother just isn’t like that. Wish I were still able to learn from him.

Dad asks me something, but because I’m secretly mad at him, I say something in the wrong tone of voice. My mistake. He yells at me. I don’t even flinch. But I apologize once he’s done. I say, “Sorry, Dad. I didn’t mean it. I’m just a little out of it.”

He says something about me always being smart with him and making snide comments. I can’t say I don’t try. It’s hard to hold it back when I hear him contradicting himself in the same sentence.

My little brother leaves his room, and comes up to Dad, saying: “No, Dad, it’s me you’re thinking about. She didn’t do anything. It’s me who always gets into trouble!”

In a way he’s right, but it’s still nice to hear that.

My Dad tells him, on top of his lungs, to go back to his room. My brother obliges, but once he’s gone, I say, loudly enough to be heard:

“Hey Dad, lay off. He’s just a kid.”

And I really don’t care what happens next.

Vasilinia Kochurina

College of Pharmacy
La Push, 2nd Beach, Candace Moorer
Washington

Library
The grasp of what I have done escapes me
I lay in bed sore, depressed, and having to pee
I hit the call button for a pill that will make it subside
At least if I failed, I will have tried
People call me good, people call me a saint
I feel sick, light-headed and faint
If they only knew, if they only saw
They wouldn’t remark or stare at me in awe
I did this out of greed
I did this out of need
To repay a guilt
That I had built.
As a child we were so close
But we drifted as age opposed
I should have talked to her more
But to a kid it was a chore
My grandmother was old
Her hands were too cold
I remember so much from so long ago
It plays in my mind like a picture show
I remember her house, her food, and face
I can almost go back to that time and space
But what drives me the most was her last breath
A slow, painful, acidic, and tough death
She died from refusal of dialysis
But I had killed her with my paralysis
She was hard to hug and hard to kiss
Now it is her that I miss
So I pay a debt I owe to my Grandmother
I have given my kidney away to another
I forgot to give her the love that was inside
At least now I can say that I tried.

On December 17th, 2008, I donated my kidney to a stranger. People have asked me why and I’ve tried to explain, but I think this poem says it best.

Zachary Wade Sutton
Rehabilitation Sciences
Denali

Colin Crowe

College of Medicine
What Kind of People Live Here?

The pediatrics office is closing while the office for old people is the biggest in town. Most people look at me with eyes peering out between wrinkles talking with pride about children who have moved away. Or friends passed away. Or abilities fallen away. Or old farms washed away. Or bright colors faded away. The only stores here sell antiques and the only lives lead here are the same. But like the things too old to keep pace but too familiar to throw away, I don’t want to see them go. And unlike the world I am visiting, I love the world they live in. The one that bounces between their mouths and their graying hair covered ears. Their world, that has little place in mine, that speaks slower and softer but with more meaning. I don’t care if it does not exist, if the concerns of war or corruption or lie-beaten despair have not reached this place. It is enough for me that they believe.

Matthew Dettmer
College of Medicine
Hibiscus

Diana Wells

College of Pharmacy
The darkness is cold.
The pain is plenty.
Nothing lets up,
Never gently.

So many choices led
To a life declined.
Everything's changed,
People have realigned.

In the middle I sit,
Reflecting on what I've become.
Sifting through the moments,
Cursing what can't be undone.

Reassessing value.
Coming up naught.
It's myself
That's always at fault.

Suddenly a ray of hope,
Enteres my sight.
Gives me a reason
To run through the night.

Where will I stop?
When will it end?
Whatever it is --
Will it be enough to mend?

Adrian Nida
College of Graduate Studies
Jefferson Memorial

Nancy Carson Dennis  College of Nursing
Rosy’s Find

Genevieve Thul

Finally Home

Kristi Rodgers-Cishek

College of Nursing

Office of Integrated Planning and Assessment
2008 Palmetto Portraits Project

In 2006, the Medical University of South Carolina asked six noted and emerging photographers to focus on portraying South Carolinians in the Lowcountry, Piedmont, and Upstate, reflecting the full range and diversity of the state’s citizens, occupations and recreational activities. In creating a collection of art to display within MUSC’s educational and clinical buildings, the University hoped to remind students, faculty, staff, and visitors of the people they serve not only at MUSC, but throughout South Carolina. The project has continued, and from the third installment of Palmetto Portraits, we have selected seven for inclusion in *Humanitas*.

2008 Palmetto Portraits Photographers

Gayle Broker
Ruth Rackley
Blake Praytor
Cecil Williams
Julia Lynn
HERMAN THOMPSON
Blake Praytor
Josh Neissenbaum
and Helen Rice
Gayle Broker
Dr. Leo Twiggs

Cecil Williams
Paul Cormier
Julia Lynn
Do you want to be a part of the next Humanitas?

Please send submissions to:

Kristi Rodgers  
E-Mail: humanitas@musc.edu  
Campus Mail: MSC 205  
Office: 17 Ehrhardt St. Suite 3

or in person at the MUSC Library Circulation Desk.