

HUMANITAS

Medical University of South Carolina

Volume 7, 2003

PREFACE

Dear Friends,

After the release of the 2002 edition of *Humanitas*, we enjoyed hearing that our readers were surprised to learn their friend, mentor, or co-worker has an “artistic side.” While being a member of the health care profession brings respect and trust, it may also carry with it the stigma of scientific detachment. We are joyful to have the opportunity to disseminate the thoughts, feelings, fears, and passions of members of MUSC. We believe this sharing will help to draw our hospital community closer.

It is a privilege to return this year as editors of the 2003 edition of *Humanitas*. You may remember that last year we set out on a thematic journey through the life cycle, from Birth all the way to Death. This time we embark on a new journey: a unique progression born of the creativity of the MUSC community.

We start with the theme of the *Individual* in “For Sarah.” We take a sharp turn to the collective, as we explore the timely issue of *War* with “My Paintless War Wagon.” Themes of *Politics and Deception* are confronted in “Rocking Horse Girl,” “Alive and Well,” and “How We Love the Liar.” We also look at *Commercialism* with “Dead Mall Maserati” and “American Express Commercial (A Found Poem).”

Next, this issue proposes the life cycle in a different sequence. We move on to *Infirmity, Death, and Rebirth* with “To Florence,” “A Pondered Honor,” and “The Old Oak.” We recall vivid *Childhood* days in “Memories,” “Progress,” and “Maggie.” Then it is romantic *Love*, both hopeful and elusive, in “Fantuccino,” “Jazz in the Air,” and “A New Beginning.”

Finally, our destination lies in the glimpse of *Equanimity* shared by “This Lazy Afternoon” and “Perspective (A Haiku).” Throughout this thematic progression, writers’ words are punctuated and expanded by the images of our talented photographers.

A new addition to *Humanitas* this year is the category of song lyrics. You may access the full studio recording of Adrian Grimes singing his “Rocking Horse Girl” through our website, <http://www.edserv.musc.edu/humanitas/>.

We hope you enjoy these thoughtful works of poetry, prose, lyrics, and photography created by your colleagues and friends here on campus. It is our pleasure to bring such a fine collection to you this year.

In closing, we would like to extend our gratitude to the University for their support, and perhaps more importantly, to the artists and writers who are willing to share their work. Also, we are indebted to this year’s readers: Jodi Anderson, Rita Cuthbertson, and Christopher Fyock. As always, this magazine would not have been possible without the selfless contributions of Dr. Carol Lancaster, Dr. Bert Keller, and Kristi Rodgers. They are the roots of this project.

Keep creating, MUSC!

Erica Grace Smith
Eric Sribnick

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Cover: **Looking Through Rose Colored Glasses**, Scott Henderson



Halloween in Salem

Randy Hunt
College of Medicine

For Sarah

Since last week, I see your face in my mind's eye.
That wonderful mouth, pouty upper lip
as if you were injected in utero
God preparing you for a cabaret life.

Sensuously-spaced teeth shown sparingly
and when you smile, the wait is justified.
There are other looks: curiosity, entitlement, impatience.
You seem barely able to wait your turn.

Dark eyes with that lingering gaze.
What are you thinking? No fear in those eyes
no fear in that cry, only demand
an unquestioned expectation . . . your way!
And yet, you are all sweetness
confident that everyone loves you
and why not?

Layton McCurdy
Department of Psychiatry and College
of Medicine



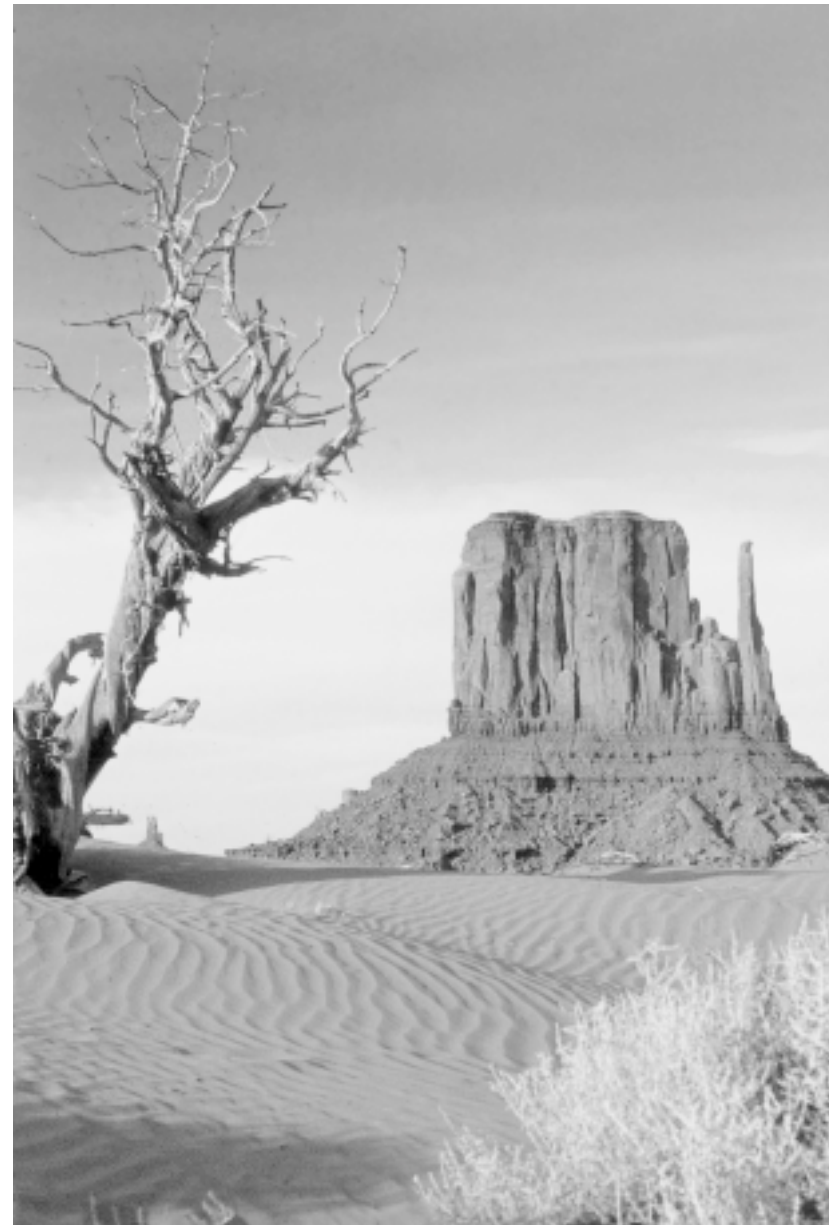
Mona Lisa Nails

Deza Borckardt
Department of Neurology

My Paintless War Wagon

I drive my paintless war wagon into the desert
Looking for the enemy's blood to shed.
Because I think the enemy may be somewhere
Other than in my head.
I drive my paintless war wagon into the city
Looking for some brand new urban victims.
One thing I'll say in my defense
I always know how to pick 'em.
I drive my paintless war wagon into the painted desert
And look for the painted enemy,
So I can quench my thirst for war dead.
I put my paintless war wagon back into my toy box
So I'll know where to find it for the war tomorrow.

Michael McIntyre
MUSC Library



Untitled

Elizabeth Bear
College of Nursing

Rocking Horse Girl (Song Lyrics)

Girl's voice: They think we're silly.

Man's voice: Why do they think we're silly?

Girl's voice: Because all atoms have electrons, so existence is electricity, but we pay people lots of money to give us electricity wrapped up in big words like generator.

She's been picking up signals from Venus and Mars, "Cause there's somebody out there," she said.

"But there's no need to worry, they're quite ordinary, just inquisitive and timid," she said.

And I have no reason to doubt her. She's too innocent for malicious intent.

And, bright as she may be, these are not the stories a Rocking Horse Girl would invent.

They'd like to approach us for a beer and a chat, but they're not quite sure what to expect.

Cause they've seen us react to what we don't understand; they don't think that we'd show them respect.

But they're worried about our politicians who sing for their supper with lies,

And care for nothing except their positions while around them the community dies.

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

Should we make some commitment to change or commit her instead?

"They're concerned by the way that we treat one another, defending fictitious borders," she said.

"And by the chaos that's caused by the criminal minds who control law and order," she said.

"How we loved Oppenheimer for what he achieved, how Gatling was praised for his gun,

And how governments are quick to invest in inventions with potential for killing someone."

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

Should we make some commitment to change or commit her instead?

"They can see contradiction in the fact that our instincts are strong for self survival," she said,

"And yet we allow that our ignorance sets us on a course suicidal," she said,

"But by using the power of the people, which they say has never been so strong, We can stop the futile attempts of the politically correct to hide the intrinsically wrong."

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

That's what she said!

Should we make some commitment to change or commit her instead?

Adrian Grimes

College of Graduate Studies

Alive and Well

In the beginning God created
free *will* – *n.* voluntary choice or
decision – *n.* the act or process of
deciding – *v.* (inflected form) to select as a course of
action – *n.* an act of *will*.

Idling at red lights on an abandoned street
or forbidding matrimony among gays
or telling me not to play the lottery
or attempting to act on beneficence
without regard to self-determination.

“We must protect these people from themselves.”
Thank goodness free will is alive and well.

Jodi Anderson
College of Medicine

How We Love the Liar

And hate the lie?
Strange, but something within us,
Accepts both.
Is it our gentle nature,
Or deep, collective guilt?
Wishing to look away, we smooth the coverlet
Of our bed of little white ones, soiled gray ones,
Tucking in tolerance
As our flowery comforter.

See how our garden grows,
Threesomes budding on the vine,
Three peas in each puckered pod:
The lie, the liar, and the truth.
Ready to be shelled nimbly,
Or, more often than not,
Neglected over time,
To wither and brown on the stem,
Drifting in the wind, unnoticed,
To soft earth, unless
Some passing beetle
Needs a morsel to chew on.

Stanley Schuman
Department of Family Medicine

Dead Mall Maserati

Multivitamin skin cream, fortifying hopes and dreams
Harvard Business School births CEO Dream Team
Corporate co-ed drug slavery (HIV in semen stream),
Diesel engines, last wheat crop, China bursting at the seams.
Panda mascot, hidden abuse, millions of wasted Catholic youth,
Stupid teenage beauty, bad poetry, empty voting booth,
Tiny baubles for your soul, futile search for the truth,
Driver-side impact, immigration of the inept and uncouth.
Betadine Vegas Polyethylene halogen lamp
First one to sell out gets a MTV-fashion revamp,
Hide your frustration (scream, spit, and stamp),
Love in death makes martyrs, and money makes a paper champ.
Someone's only hope, someone's lost love, cold/bloated/blue
Found wedged underneath the off-ramp going through
The last dead mall in town, the last girl covered in bugs and dew,
(It's all about self-service) the red, the white, the you.
Over before it's begun, we forgot to cut your umbilical cord.
Even the burnouts have gone Pentium on the psych ward,
It's so messed up here. In your Maserati, your Mustang Ford.
We left what was important behind – crashing and burning in the year of our Lord.

Greg Black
College of Medicine



Expired

Deza Borckardt
Department of Neurology

American Express Commercial (A Found Poem)

I stare at the words like
a cat discovering a carton of milk,
its product whitening a kitchen floor.
WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF,
NOW AVAILABLE WITH EVERY PURCHASE.

In my mind, I see them:
eight credit bankers circle a grave
each stands equidistant from both neighbors,
their Brooks Brothers suits covered by
thick brown felt robes, faces shadowed
by hoods pulled well past their foreheads.
They chant an ancient Celtic dirge of
vowel ridden diction; sounds leak
from the mouths onto the ground
like cold night-time smoke and seep
deep into the earth. The weight carries
them to the carcass,
and my grandfather awakes
with a birth cry.

Eric Sribnick
Colleges of Medicine and Graduate
Studies



Untitled

Virginia Baker
College of Graduate Studies

To Florence

The silver walker moves forward;
The heavy, awkward body
Slow under its own weight,
An ancient caravan
Lost in uncharted lands.

Once
In western New York state,
A silver skate etched an icy pond
With delicate spiraling lines
Effortless arabesque without design
While crows called from the empty woods.

Chores left unfinished.
Slender legs pumping through snow
Wet boots inside the doorway
“Supper’s on the table,” said mother.
Time to be home.

David Bachman
Departments of Neurology and
Psychiatry



Burnside’s Bravado

Amy Hovatter
MUSC Wellness Center

A Pondered Honor

For fear of her merely blinking, yet only imagined,
I pondered the honor, and straightened her shroud.
For fear of misunderstanding, and certainly reasoned,
I knelt now closer, while the teacher sang his thoughts
aloud.

And soon the sinews of her heart concealed a scale
With parts divided, once a path of liquid life.
Her hands, a story whose strength did recently fail,
wrought the echo of a loving mother, or a good man's wife.
This thinning frame, a key to keep human hearts burning,
has yielded all bonds or facets that would seem
Whose last breaths were of my first learning.
Whose death, was not death, but the quiescence of a dream.

Greg Black
College of Medicine



Three

Melissa Fraser
College of Graduate Studies

The Old Oak

I wandered through the woods,
afoot over hills bathed in early fall crimson
and came across an old oak.
She had fallen in the forest,
and her leaves were tattered and torn.
She lay on her side across a stream,
surrounded by the other trees
she had nurtured for many years.
Her roots, bare to the sun,
were testimony to her centuries of service.
She was the guardian of this forest,
an able sentry, a stalwart, a protector.
Each year, her acorns a hundred score
scattered across the forest floor
and from a few, a tiny life struggled to reach the sky.
Now these mighty trees glistened,
red, orange and brown,
creating a fanfare of colors
in remembrance, in gratitude.
This old oak would not be forgotten.
She will again return to the forest,
to enrich the soil and cultivate her progeny.
The cycle of life reigns anew,
the forest will grow and others will take her place.
This old oak had done her job,
she helped create a forest,
and her children are witness
to an enduring miracle of life.

John Welton
College of Nursing



Daydreaming

Kristina Lynn Avery Rodgers
Office of PACE, Testing, and Surveys

Memories

They sat on the porch, the old man and the young girl. He was sitting in a pressed back chair, and she was in the porch swing, sitting on one leg and with the other, slowly pushing the swing. His cup of black coffee smelled delicious, the steam swirling as he poured a saucer full, blew on it, and sipping it rather loudly. This routine was repeated until the cup was empty. The girl sat watching, fascinated, not knowing if she should approve of this way of drinking coffee or if she should be embarrassed by the lack of proper manners. It would be much later in life that she would learn that this was an old custom, especially among tea drinkers.

He was a fascinating man: tall, lean, the skin on his face like leather, a head full of gray curly hair and a full mustache. He needed a shave.

After he finished his coffee, he took a pipe from one pocket, a package of Prince Albert tobacco from the other pocket and began to pack his pipe. He looked at the girl in the swing and knew she wanted to light the pipe. He held his arm out toward her with the matches in his hand. She took the matches, struck one, and put the flame to the tobacco. He sheltered the pipe with his hand and pulled on the pipe a few times. The tobacco caught. The girl looked at the old man. Their eyes met, and they smiled. She was pleased. She knew that her mother would not be pleased at all. But her mother wasn't here. She couldn't spoil this time they were spending together by voicing her disapproval of the man, the way he drank his coffee and his smoking.

This child dearly loved the old man. He talked to her. He listened to her. He never disapproved of her. His love was unconditional.

He began to talk. There was a saying he often could be talked into repeating. She didn't know if it was a song or a poem. She didn't really understand it. But she loved to hear him say the words. "I'm a man, a man amuncha magnitude of pea ponderosity." Then he would throw his head back and laugh. "Say it again Papa, say it again," the girl cried out. And so he would.

As he looked at the girl, he rubbed his face, the short stubby hairs making a raspy noise. "I need a shave," he said. With that, the girl broke into a wide grin, jumped from the swing and went to get the shaving things - soap, brush, razor, hot water, and a towel. First, she soaked the towel in the hot water and then placed it carefully, gingerly on the old man's face. Then she picked up the soap and brush and began to work on a lather. She removed the towel and began to paint his face with the lather of soap. Slowly, very carefully, getting it on all of the areas to be shaved but not near his eyes or his mustache.

Having completed the careful lathering, she now picked up the razor, a straight edge razor. What is he thinking? He's letting this girl shave him with a straight edge razor. He looked completely at ease, not one bit worried. I doubt that he had even considered that her hand might slip and she might cut him. Between these two, there was complete trust and understanding. He seemed to know that she would be very careful. If it should happen, he would comfort her because she would be terribly upset.

The shaving begins. Gently, carefully, she shaves him. He sits, eyes closed, quiet, and still. No one speaks. The razor is pulled downward, lather wiped away, blade rinsed. This is repeated until the job has been completed.

She rinses the towel in the warm water and wipes away any remains of the lather. It's done like a mother would gently bathe a baby. She takes a comb and combs his gray hair - hairs that are curly and wiry. She smoothes his rather bushy eyebrows, then she takes his hand in hers and begins to cut and file his nails. He loves the attention and she is only too glad to be the one to give it.

Patricia Gaston
College of Medicine Dean's Office

Progress

Dearest Grandma can we have
a piece of bacon rind,
we're goin' to Rockwater Hole
crawdads, we hope to find.

We also need a bit of string
to tie our bacon on,
we're gonna catch some crawdads
if they ain't already gone.

"I'll be glad to get some string
a bit of bacon too,
but first, you have to promise me
no swimming will you do."

Oh no Grandma, we won't go in
we know we can't do that,
cross our hearts and hope to die
can we take old Tom, the cat?

He likes to play with crawdads
when they're safe inside our can,
jes' let one stick his head up
old Tom swats 'em down again!

We start out walkin' down the path
then run onto the lane,
as we walk and run we play
all kinds of silly games.

We'd swing on those old grapevines
smoke jes' one or two,
if Grandma knowed we'd done all that
she'd a switched us black and blue!

We finally make it to the hole
the water's red as clay,
but that's alright, it only makes
our game more fun to play.

We tie the bacon on our string
then slowly drop it down.
Underwater homes of holes
is where crawdads are found.

You wait until you feel a tug
then quickly, with your hand,
you sweep it up onto the bank
and throw it in your can!

We caught lots of those old crawdads
just as all the times before.
We never thought that one day
this place would be no more.

Rockwater Hole exists no more
like so many things of old.
When we asked where did it go
"progress" is what we'z told.

Julie Westbrook Keith
College of Nursing



Untitled

Gayenell Magwood
College of Nursing

Maggie

She was a tall, sparse woman, old and dark. I remember her scant hair was held up in a net on her head with the twist knot on her brow. She wore a baggy, no color dress when she came to our house weekday mornings to clean. The front of it was worn shiny from wiping her hands in it. Sometimes, when she would bend over at the hip to clean and sweep, her wrinkled breasts draped in the neck of her dress. They looked like Dad's dark woolen socks on the clothesline, pinched and folded. I was only eleven. I had never seen any bodies but my own and my baby brother's. She told me that's what happens when you nurse a bunch of babies. I made a mental note about babies. Everything Maggie said was the God's truth.

Maggie taught me things in her own way. She would do, I would follow around, a bit back. When she taught me about crabbing, she took no notice of me until, turning in her shapeless dress without seeming to see me, she handed me the crab bucket. It was like that.

Crabbing was careful business. You needed carefully seasoned bait or you got nothing but a burn from the sun. She would throw chicken backs and necks up on the low roof beside the screen porch of our house. They had to be ripe, and how those things reeked after a couple of days in the summer sun. Then, when the tide was coming in, she tied those chicken pieces in string and got the old crab bucket and hoop net. She walked out in the backyard with these things to the little beach we had on the Wando River. She slipped off her too-wide and worn shoes and waded to her ankles in the river as it rose.

She flung a crab line out in the water without even looking where it fell and staked it with a stick. Several lines would be set. She watched the lines until one would lose its slackness and, sort of, try to walk off. Gently, slowly, she pulled in the string, finger over finger. As the crab gripped the bait, picking off small pieces, feeding its rapidly moving mouth parts, she pulled it over the long-handled net laying in the water in front of her. Snap, she had it. She grabbed the blue crab by its hind legs through the net weaving, tugged its claws free, and tossed it in the bucket. Before long, she had a whole bucket of them blowing salt water bubbles.

In the kitchen, the big pot was already at a boil on the stove. One by one, each crab was lifted and separated from the clinging others with kitchen pinchers and dropped in the pot. They turned red as soon as they went under. Maggie cleaned crabs under the full force of the kitchen spigot. I pulled the shell off from the rear joint and cleaned out the deadman's fingers before cracking the body in half, leaving the legs and claws attached to the white undershell.

Maggie broke off the claws and piled them on a big platter. She saved the bodies to carefully pick out the white meat for the grownups' deviled crab. At supptime, we kids took the platter and assorted nutcrackers out to the picnic table in the yard. No need for napkins or a tablecloth. We cracked the claws and ate the meat with boiled crab juice dripping down our faces, arms, and all. When we were finished, Maggie came out and turned on the garden hose. She washed the table and us kids down good. We ran around wiggling and squealing. Maggie never smiled with her lips, that would show her toothless gums, but she smiled a lot. She could make you bust out laughing with her eyes.

A couple of years later, I was all keen on wanting to drive the car. My parents always said, "sure, sure, not now, later, later." They had wearied of telling me "NO." I was tall enough to reach the pedals and just about see over the steering wheel. That alone should be enough of a reason. I was carrying on with Maggie while she worked to pin the laundry on the clothesline that hung between two big pine trees behind the driveway. She cut her eyes at me and said, "OK! Get in the car." Hey, Maggie was the maid, had never driven a car, and my parents were just inside the house, but I wasn't going to pass up the chance to drive with a blamable adult aboard. The car was headed out the driveway outside of the carport. She got in the passenger seat as she usually did. I jumped behind the wheel. The keys were hanging in the ignition. They always were.

I turned the key and the car started right up. "Hot damn, this is easy," I thought too loud. Maggie said, "Watch your mouth, girl!" I was grinning so big that I was about to break something. I pulled the shift lever on the steering column down, and we were off. I was driving about 2 miles per hour wiggling down the driveway, trying to miss the bordering trees that suddenly seemed to move into my way. A branch brushed the windshield, and I screamed. Sweat was pouring off me. Maggie just sat, looking straight ahead, smiling wicked with her eyes.

I finally got out of the driveway and stopped. It seemed like a million miles back to the carport. I had been holding my breath and was about to faint. Maggie was saying nothing, not even looking at me. "Damn," I said to myself much less loudly this time. I decided to turn around and make my first driving foray into a circumnavigation of our driveway. It turned out that the street was more narrow

than expected. I ended up driving through a part of the neighbor's yard, doing considerable damage to their dwarf azalea hedge. I was just thankful that there were no nasty curbs on our neighborhood streets. I got the wood-paneled Ford station wagon back in that narrow driveway, past those harrowing trees, and parked in the backyard. The carport looked like a shoebox.

We both got out of the car, neither of us saying a word. Maggie went back to hanging the wash. I went in the house. Mom was peeling carrots at the sink. Father was in his favorite chair, watching a ball game. I went on down the hall to my room and fell face down on the bed. Driving was for grownups. It isn't about being almost tall enough at all.

Just because you want something real bad, doesn't mean you should have it. Unfortunately, I've had to re-learn this lesson several times. It sure is a tough one.

Yvonne Michel
College of Nursing

Fantuccino

i imagined her
her glistening gold hair
still wistful warm smile
naked in time
and me...

The scent of coffee caught me,
That smell of old rain-soaked ashes.
The caffeine kicked in,
Reawakening me to reality:
I am here,
And she's just the coffee girl.

Wythe Wyndham Owens
College of Medicine



Giampaolo
Daniella Montalbano
College of Pharmacy

Jazz in the Air

the girl sits across from him
with mysterious brown eyes

as Miles comes to mind

the fracas begins to grow
the horn player begins to blow

as Miles comes to mind

night turns to early morning
emotions and sweet melodies roam the air

as Miles comes to mind

mysterious brown eyes disappear
he turns to embrace the chords and hide his scorn

as Miles comes to mind

Joshua Ivey
MUSC Library

A New Beginning

She, stunning, standing alone
Whispers fade in the coming.
A connection of archaic past
Never finding solace in my heart.
Prayers untold to no one
Find easy passage to my thoughts.
A chance for the hidden apparition
Of my desires to surface
Aberrant in nature -
A chance for a new beginning.

Jason Radecke
College of Medicine



Foggy Dock

Lynn Anglin
College of Nursing

This Lazy Afternoon

I, spread-eagle on the hammock
Between sea marsh live oaks.
I luxuriate in repose,
Contemplate blue sky above me,
Watch sunlight warm the tops of tall pines,
Watch cloud-wisps brush the sky,
Feel the gentlest marsh breeze,
Helping me tilt, helping me sway.

What a grand but simple invention,
This fisherman's net
Woven by weathered fingers,
Well-schooled for generations.
This net, so supple and strong,
Unyielding to elemental gravity,
Transforming my corporeal weight
Into an airy lightness.

So here I lie, daytime dreamer,
Lulled by lassitude,
Simply existing, vaguely sensing,
If I had time to think about it,
How my life has been a web,
Spun by unseen fingers,
Intertwining loved ones' lives
With mine, defying the laws
Of gravity and earthliness,
As now and again, we are tugged
By chance, and non-chance,
As mysterious as the quiet strength
Of the two giant oaks beside me,
Adorned with Spanish moss,
Celebrating the salt air
And lifting my spirit,
In contentment,
And beauty...
Here, after all, is peace.

Stanley Schuman
Department of Family Medicine



Japanese Tea Garden

April Corley-Daniels
College of Medicine

Perspective (A Haiku)

Summoned to relax,
I remember life can be
More than I let it.

Lilless Shilling
College of Health Professions



The Great Land

Michelle Gardner
MUSC STICU