

Anatomy Creative Projects II 2009

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I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and I was lucky enough to get yours! Your poem was very heartfelt (I liked the rhyme scheme), and showed great sensitivity toward your cadaver. You pose an important question – just how can you repay that kind of gift? I was struck by the solemnity of your promise to him. I hope you remember “Bill or Peter or Drew” occasionally throughout your medical training and beyond. He'll be with you if you pause to listen. And in that way, I think you will return his generosity thricefold – and more. Best, Dr. Shapiro

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Hello, ██████. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and I received your thoughtful poem. I loved that you wrote it from the point-of-view of the cadaver. Like great philosophers and ordinary people over the centuries, you ask the question, where does the soul reside? And like them, you don't find any completely satisfying answers. I was also intrigued by your view that anatomy lab might be a kind of limbo for the cadaver – that the “bloomy” wholeness that awaits us after death is postponed until the final cremation. If that is so, it makes donation an even more generous and remarkable act! Thanks for your meditations, Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and how fortunate I was to receive yours! Your perspective on anatomy is truly intriguing. Especially fascinating – I guess to you, as well as to me – was the dissimilarities between your reaction preparing pelvises and your response to anatomy. First, I am so glad to hear that dissection was a much more positive experience this time around. Secondly, I wonder if it has something to do with intention and commitment. As an undergrad lab tech, you were just doing a job. As a medical student, you are embarked on a journey to heal and save lives. Rites of passage certainly can be empty and meaningless – mere hoops. But sometimes they are chockfull of meaning. I think you found this fullness in the anatomy course. Congratulations! Dr. Shapiro

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Hi ██████. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and I got your essay, which I really enjoyed reading. Nope, nope, nope... no epiphany, no transcendence. I was really laughing, even while I felt your disappointment and doubt. It sounded kind of like The Emperor's New Clothes (. Your honesty was magnificent! That is what's important, being your authentic self, epiphanies or no. You know, a spiritual teacher I admire wrote a book, called After the Ecstasy, the Laundry. His point was that moments of spiritual illumination are all very well; but when they end, as they inevitably do, we have to go back to leading our ordinary lives – and further, that how we live day to do is probably a lot more important than those little jolts of awe.

And by the way, I think you got it completely right in terms of relinquishing “emotional epiphany.” The concluding paragraphs you wrote about “communing” with your “silent mentors”, your ability to make them “whole,” were for me some of the most transcendent (and lyrical) words I’ve ever read about dissection. Not flashy, but completely profound. Maybe your “ecstasy” is comfortable and low-key, but it’s there. Best, Dr. Shapiro P.S. I *loved* your footnote about the connection between your emotional state and how dissection proceeds. I hope you keep in mind this insight as you proceed through your training and patient care. I know as a student, you feel under the gone, compelled to produce information, data, right answers. But if you can stay calm and be patient, often the process (with patients and teachers alike) flows more easily.

Hi, [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students’ creative projects; and I received your very beautiful essay. You showed great honesty and self-awareness, qualities that will stand you in good stead as you reach the clinical years. (I thought the image of a scavenger hunt was terrific – a perfect metaphor for a certain aspect of anatomy!). I’d also reinforce an insight you’ve had on your own – that you do not need to be focusing on the relational or emotional ramifications of patient care at every second. There is a reason surgeons drape their patients, so they can focus on the task-at-hand. But if the patient is never (metaphorically) undraped, he or she is reduced to an object, and obviously that does do disservice to the humanity. To me, the essential issue is learning this kind of “double movement” – when you must act, and when you must cry; and when you must rejoice. You do not need to sacrifice your humanity to be a good doctor; and you don’t need to be overwhelmed by it either. It seems to me you are already starting to understand that. Thanks for this work, Dr. Shapiro

Hello [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students’ creative projects; and I got the chance to read your poem. I liked the way you used this project to reflect on the entirety of your journey through the anatomy course. You’ve come a long way. I also liked the way you structured the poem as “words of wisdom” to those who will follow. The experience of anatomy is, as you’ve discovered, full of blood, sweat, and tears; indescribable, unforgettable, remarkable. These are adjectives that I suspect you will use again and again in your medical training. All of them belong in your vocabulary! Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi, [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students’ creative projects; and as part of this work, I had the chance to read your essay. First, thank you for paying such careful attention during my presentation. From my point of view, it achieved what I hoped for – that it would encourage students to *think*. You are definitely thinking, and to me, that is a good thing. I’d only caution you not to think with too much negative *judgment* about your responses. You have little to be guilty about, and much to be excited for. Enthusiasm and eagerness for what you are doing and learning are *good* things. Maybe what I’d ask you to think about a bit is what is making you feel

guilty. As you continue in your medical training, you'll find you do many things to your patients that are painful, frightening, and difficult. But because of the underlying therapeutic contract you have with your patient that you have the responsibility to do these things with caring and respect. It is because of the humanity of both you and your patients that you are able to become partners in an often frustrating, sometimes challenging, but ultimately always humane endeavor. In my mind, I believe you have the same opportunity for partnership with your cadaver. I hope you agree. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. Hope the year is finishing up very well for you. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and as part of this work, I had the chance to review your poem again. It only improves on second encounter. Of course, the visual is simply fabulous. And of course the allusion to its "wandering" nature is apropos. But for me the best part is the plea to gain "some kinda understanding." It sums up beautifully what anatomy is all about. Very well done :-). Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi [REDACTED]. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and as part of this work, I had the chance to review your essay. It was a privilege to read your reflections. I think in contemplating your anatomy experience, you've also discovered something about the essence of medicine itself – it is often difficult, sometimes tedious, but nevertheless always inspiring at the deepest level. That is because, ultimately, it is about life and death, suffering and yes joy. I'm so glad to learn you are starting not only to think, but to feel like a doctor. Indeed you are on your way. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi you two future Idols :-). Thanks for your patience. I am one of the faculty members who work with Dr. Leonard to review students' creative projects; and as part of this work, I had the chance to listen again to your cd. How totally cool! You know, it was still clever and funny (working in all those anatomy terms was pretty impressive), but it was surprisingly poignant as well. Your caring, respect, and gratitude toward the cadaver really came through. And when I listened to the original, I was struck by the theme of distance and closeness ("I'm by your side") that seemed to fit so well with anatomy that simultaneously traverse great distances (life to death) and provides intimate proximity (there you are actually with your hands on the inside of the cadaver). Well done on many levels – music, humor, and "love" (after all, Delilah is a love song :-)). All the best to both of you, Dr. Shapiro