

LITERATURE AND MEDICINE SELECTIVE – CREATIVE PROJECTS 5/05

I'm glad I got a chance to take a second look at your poem. I didn't realize what a really good poem it is. Listening to it the first time, I didn't appreciate how carefully you structured the poem, with the alternating short and long lines and identifiable meter. The party metaphor in the concluding lines also didn't really sink in – this was inspired. It is both supremely appropriate (celebrating a successful surgical intervention) and troublingly inappropriate (partying while someone else's life may be at stake). It was also a vivid depiction of the “arc” of the surgical experience – the initial energy, motion, activity followed by stillness and emptiness. As I mentioned in class, I particularly liked the relative absence of people – they are reduced to mere ants. What dominates the scene are the surgical tools that create both the fervor and the sense of abandonment. Very well done. Regards, Dr, Shapiro

this is a strikingly perceptive and well-written essay. It has a very distinctive voice – your reader feels right away s/he would recognize this person if he ran into him again. It is initially extraordinarily funny because of how unflinchingly honest the narrator is about his little manipulations, half-truths, and outright deceptions; and because of the somewhat narcissistic self-focus. Unfortunately, we all see something of ourselves in this portrayal. Then you pull off a brilliant shift in tone – very hard to do. A casually embarrassing encounter becomes colored by intimations of suffering and mortality. The narrator realizes how much more is at stake than his ego. In an exquisitely written line, you say simply “You are always way worse than you perceive yourself to be.” That is masterful writing (as a psychologist, however, I'd say it is way too harsh – perhaps it's more accurate to say we are always more complicated than we think). And then the next line, also so simple: “I'll work on it.” It conveys a powerful commitment, which is fulfilled in the very next action the narrator takes. That it does not yield the desired result is even better, because that's part of the complexity of life. It's still a beautiful day. This is a very impressive piece on many levels. Dr. Shapiro

this was a beautiful piece of writing. It is extraordinarily perceptive and at the same time deeply moving. You perform a highly skilled dissection of the anatomy experience that leaves even the non-medical student (i.e., your professor) in awe of this remarkable journey from the naïvete and idealism of the first day to the cynicism of midterm to the (hoped for) gratitude and hope that may accompany the conclusion of the course. Throughout the essay you play with the contrasting themes of parts and whole. In the last sentence, you bring them together magnificently – in the midst of ruins, it is the doctor's task to find hope; among the shadows, it is up to the doctor to see clearly. The mural and quotes only serve to reinforce and emphasize this message of integration and inspiration. Well done! Dr. Shapiro

You guys, this skit was not just funny, it was hilarious! You are all three of you talented actors. The whole performance reminded me of those Indian “Bollywood” films. The songs were perfectly selected to match and extend each development in the interview. As I noted in class, in addition to the enjoyable entertainment value, you also managed to do

an excellent job of providing support and counseling (using the 5 Es) to an unhappy medical student. I'd love to see a copy, if you can email it to me. Also, I would very much like to ask Dr. Rucker if you could perform it for the incoming second year class, perhaps as a coda to the presentation on the 5 E's. It was really that good! Thanks again for a highly amusing and clever presentation. Dr. Shapiro