

ART OF DOCTORING FINAL PROJECTS III 2008

--, it was a real joy to have you in AoD this year. You are an incredibly perceptive, discerning, and sensitive person; and every time you offered a comment I knew it would help us get to the heart of the matter. In a class of outstanding students, you saw especially deeply into things, and often move us beyond conventional formulations. Your final project was no exception. Since I love this poem, I was happy that you took the time to dissect it (as X said), and helped us appreciate the richness and nuance of it chunk by chunk. Poems are like patients – you can get a superficial sense first time through, but if you’re willing to linger and revisit you really learn a lot more. Thanks for reminding us of this.

I also wanted to thank you for mentioning your mom. I could see that was a hard moment for you, and understandably so. Nevertheless, by being willing to share her absence with us, you brought to our consciousness all those who, approaching momentous occasions such as graduation, we long to be with us. I am sure your mom is part of you in so many ways on a daily basis, but I hope you will think about some way of making your mom especially “present” on that day.

Thanks again for the collage. It was filled with thoughtful and inspiring images. I’m imagining that one day it might adorn the walls of your office (or maybe your refrigerator :-). Best, now and always, Dr. Shapiro

What a marvelous job you did with this project, --. The Yeats poem was an inspired selection. What a beautiful poem (I didn’t know it). And how well it embodied our angels and demons. Complementing the poem with your personal puzzle was so creative; and also demonstrated in a very concrete way for all of us how the “abstractions” of art have personal and deeply meaningful applications. It truly is about putting the pieces together, melding the two trees, integrating the different sides of our nature. You said it very well – it’s all about shifts in perception. We can feel joyful and hopeful one day; and in the same situation the next day feely grumpy and resentful. Recognizing that our emotions come and go, perhaps it is possible underneath them to cultivate a sustaining equanimity. I think that is easier as we put the pieces of our personal puzzles together (despite the rapidity with which you pulled off that feat yesterday, in my experience it usually takes a lifetime :-)). And finally, as I mentioned to you, I loved not only the metaphor of the puzzle, but the metaphor of practice. When we practice stuff, we get better at it. That holds true for playing piano, suturing, skateboarding... and being the person we want to be.

It was a pleasure to come “full circle” with you --. I have to congratulate myself for recognizing right away what a great doctor you would make :-)). Looking forward to seeing you at graduation, Dr. Shapiro

--, we didn't get a chance to talk as much as I would have liked about your terrific project (that was probably just fine with you :-)). But I did want you to know how much I appreciated it, both in terms of how carefully and meticulously you performed an emotional/spiritual "dissection" of yourself; and in terms of how much of this you were willing to share. You know, I think in life, all of us lose our way periodically; and sometimes, to keep our way, we must resist the "normative" pressures of the environment in which we find ourselves. I so respected first, your capacity for introspection, in acknowledging that you had loosened your hold on some of the things that mattered most to you; and secondly, your willingness to move beyond "complaining and whining" (although a fair amount of that is pretty justified, in my opinion :-)) and take the difficult steps you knew were necessary to reconnect with your core values and who you are. You are right that to do this takes massive discipline, especially until it becomes more routinized as part of your life. Yet the benefits, as you know, can be great. I was especially impressed that you voluntarily unplugged yourself! There is so much chatter and trivia in our daily lives that we can get completely distracted from who we are (or at least who we want to be). It sounds like it was your equivalent of Walden Pond. In any case, good for you. It sounds to me that you have been successful in reclaiming essential elements of your emotional and spiritual life; and I have no doubt that these will continue to sustain you during residency. Keep journaling, meditating, and figure out a way to turn off your pager occasionally :-). All the best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi --, thank you for that completely original project. It was really good, and really interesting. Of course, on a literal level, it was just amusing to realize all the double meanings that are floating around out there if you are "in the know." But since we spent time yesterday talking about metaphors, I also thought your project was a great metaphor for different ways of seeing on all levels. This is at once the blessing and the burden of being a physician. As we've discussed, because you are trained to observe carefully and astutely, because you have expert knowledge, you see things other people don't. You "see" when someone is going to die even though they just feel "itchy." You also "see" the anatomy at work when a mom hugs her kid. You even "see" through patients' bravado or defiance to their underlying aloneness and fear. All these things are at once privilege and responsibility. Thank you for finding a lighthearted way to remind us of this. Best, Dr. Shapiro P.S. Since we are talking of layers of meaning, did it ever strike you as ironic that vincristin means wine of Christ? Strange world!

Hi --. Thank you SO MUCH for your project and for my picture. Your words mean a great deal and I will treasure them. I particularly valued what you said about hidden relationships in your presentation. This was truly a beautiful and profound thought, and something I believe strongly. We rarely know how much we have touched others' lives... unless they take the time and effort to tell us directly, as you did with your personalized photos (and handwritten notes yet!) for each member of the class. This was a such a generous and original gesture. It shows the kind of

compassionate, caring physician you will be. I can very easily see you as a psychiatrist. You are thoughtful, patient, and see deeply into the heart of things. I was always glad when you chose to make a comment in AoD because it was never superficial, but rather added a new understanding or nuance to our discussion. Thank you again, and looking forward to seeing you at graduation! Best, Dr. Shapiro