

ART OF DOCTORING FINAL PROJECTS STUDENT FEEDBACK

--, your project (as always) was quite amazing. I love Margaret Atwood (she's also written a wonderful poem about her own heart condition, btw), but I had never read this poem. It brings to the surface one of the mysteries of life – how horror and beauty can be inextricably linked. I was so impressed by your response to Dr. X in class. Things are rarely as straightforward as we make them – good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Rather, more often than we'd like to acknowledge, they contain elements of both. As you said, beauty can be found in grief, which does not in any way attenuate or detract from that emotion. Your painting, complementing the poem, was also both lovely and disturbing. I appreciated the detailed explication, because as a layperson I didn't see into it as deeply as I could have the first time around.

Your personal essay was equally if not more incredible. It made me wish I had had a chance to get to know you better because you are a remarkable person. I was truly awed by your statement, "I craved the vulnerability that medicine entailed." To be able to write something like that (and more importantly, feel it) tells me that you have penetrated to the true core of your profession – and are not terrified by it, but rather welcome it, and seek it out. After reading your essay, I understand more clearly from where your remark to Dr. X. emerged. This is such a profound insight – that not only the "good" and "noble" emotions, actions, events are morally beautiful; but that anger, greed, mistrust, dishonesty are profoundly human, and therefore have a certain strange beauty of their own. Bravo! I can't say more. You get it. Best, Dr. Shapiro

--, thank you for tackling a poem. I'm glad you took the risk, because it turned out really well. This poem is a wonderful, humble self-portrait, and I think from the responses of your fellow students that you were speaking for many of them as well. You write in an authentic voice – I believed in your growing diagnostic and procedural skills, in your sense that you can rely on yourself, in your deepening understanding of suffering, loss, and healing. It's a funny thing about transformation. We're the same, only different. It sounds to me you have grown in all the right ways. Best, Dr. Shapiro P.S. Thank you again for such a creative and useful suggestion. Dr. X and I have agonized over class size, wanting both to accommodate as many students as possible and simultaneously keep some level of intimacy. One always feels a bit stupid when a very obvious solution seems to have been staring them in the face, but that is how we learn, yes? If you pay a visit to UCI-SOM next year, I guarantee you will see AoD operating in small groups :-).

--, you continue to astonish me. In some respects, you strike me as a no-nonsense, cut-to-the-chase, efficient, well-organized person (I thought I noticed you orchestrating the applause this afternoon, as if to say, "Okay, point taken, let's appreciate and move on" :-)) – maybe I was wrong, it's been known to happen). People like that tend to be strong SJs, doers more than thinkers. Yet in the correspondence we've engaged in this year, you have over and over again caught me by surprise by the depth of your self-awareness,

insight, and motivation for personal growth; as well as your great sensitivity to and skill at interpreting the dynamics of others. I truly was blown away by what you did with that collage. Students often choose to do collages to satisfy some humanities project or other, and in general the results seem to me to be one rather superficial and uninteresting. I literally couldn't believe how each word (carefully pasted into the proper row and column, that is the SJ side of you) generated such profound, nondefensive, and curious speculation and reflection. You took a rather conventional medium and turned into a sharp scalpel of self-discovery. Bravo! Best, Dr. Shapiro

--, I'm glad to learn that yoga was such a positive experience for you (see, moms do know best sometimes!). As I mentioned, I have practiced "old-lady" yoga for several years, and like you, have gained many important benefits from it. I have always liked its emphasis on breath – as you point out, this is something so elemental that anyone, young or old, in peak health or ailing, can do it. As age, arthritis, and spinal stenosis have curbed my capacity to attempt more challenging postures, I've had to come to terms with my competitive nature (yes, even in yoga class!). I've learned that practicing with my eyes closed (as much as possible) enables me to concentrate on my body (and soul) without as much comparison with those of my neighbors. Finally, shavassna (the corpse pose) has taught me how to relax and breathe in the presence of death. So yes, I agree, we can learn a lot about relaxation – and about life – from yoga. Thank you for a very interesting essay. Best, Dr. Shapiro