Wow, what was I drinking last night? Ah, I remember now, it’s the second MSc residential course, and I’m not in Kansas anymore. I’m in London, and the upcoming four days constitute one of the highlights of this MSc course. The venue nestles close within the shadow of the Tower of London, and just a reread and sip from the iconic Tower Bridge.

Answers on a postcard
First question, first day; “why are we filling white teeth with silver fillings?” answers on all three sides of a postcard please (name deleted to protect your professions). (Are you listening GDC?), maybe we should all be practising our culture vulture act, choosing the primrose path of dandiness rather than study- ing (are you listening GDC?). Maybe right now is the winter of our discontent; “a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!”

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A fire alarm had us all outside at 3.00 AM appreciating Tower Bridge by moonlight, as well as a few other eye-opening sights. An ecstasy of fumbling then back to bed.

However, Aurora in her saffron robe soon gave way to Apollo in his flaming chariot, and I made my way snail-like to school, complete with shining morning face, to begin the first of two days covering indirect restorations. Our guide into the porcelain underworld (and hopefully out the other side) was to be the effervescent Prof Nasser Barghi from San Antonio. Here is one (adopted) Texan who by teaching 44 weekends per year could definitely not be described as “all hat and no cattle”.

He is an encyclopaedia of all things ceramic; what this guy doesn’t know about bonding techniques could be etched upon the inside of a porcelain venceer. Following an absorbing two days of both theory and hands-on sessions we emerged tired but happy and with lots of state of the art clinical techniques easily applied in a busy practice environment. This residential course has such a significant hands-on element it seemed churlish not to take advantage.

All porcelained out, and being the culture vulture I am, I decided to avail myself of some of the more hedonistic pleasures the big city had to offer, and with the proximity of Shakespeare’s Globe theatre it seemed churlish not to take advantage.

Standing room only
Richard III with the excellent Mark Rylance in the title role, what a piece of luck, but standing room only available, at the admittedly bargain price of just £5.00. However, after more than three hours of standing (its Shakespeare’s second longest play) I needed a very large steak and something red and chateau-bottled as a restorative. A memorable evening was complete with a stroll home along the south bank of the Thames, through certain half-deserted streets with the city stretched out against the darkening sky, like a patient etherised upon a table.

The final day began with a hands-on root canal session in the company of the irrepres-sible Dr Daniel Flynn and some extracted teeth. Despite a wide range of nickel titanium to play with it still seems the 5 most important tools remain Irrigation, Irrigation and Irrigation. “Plus ça change”

Fatally flawed
The afternoon session introduced us to the wacky world of Research Methods. We listened first in bemused silence, progressing into unsettled mutterings and finally erupting hilariously into almost outright disbelief. It appears that almost all research is fatally flawed, especially the abstracts. I was mightily uplifted to see such dissent for once, as a normally placid profession rose up as one to express good-natured hoots of derision. We roused mutterings and finally erupted hilariously into almost outright disbelief.

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