



Seeing things

Not all reflective practice is explicitly medical. Sometimes engaging with art can help us explore broad themes that are relevant to medicine and to the care of our patients. “Hummingbirds” is a poem about life and death, but it is also about observations and the ability to link them to events, which is an integral part of the art of medicine. Relevant themes include collateral damage, unintended consequences, sanctity and respect, and mortality.

Hummingbirds

Days before the wedding in the old barn
 As its nature was swept out and relined with linen,
 The father of the bride found the dead hummingbird.
 It had flown in through the large sliding door or an unglazed window,
 Or a larger crack between boards
 And it hadn't flown out:
 Perhaps it had met one of the glassed windows in desperation.
 Perhaps, as they say, it needed nectar and there was none,
 Its race car metabolism demanding and disappointed: dying.
 Someone asked Jamie why he'd not kept the dead hummingbird
 To show the kids; *the kids would have found it interesting*, they'd said.
 Jamie said *yeah, but*.
 The wedding became: The day burst forth sweaty and beautiful and
 The groom revelled in saying *my wife* and all the narratives merged
 In the barn before they splintered again and late late in the
 Night the guests well lubricated bounced on the old floor and tested the timbers
 And the timbers held and in all their like and lust and love and anger and
 arguments and forsaken formal wear
 In the deluge of all their hearts racing autonomous and together,
 Was the blur of one living hummingbird's wings' frantic grace.

—Patrick Sullivan MD CCFP

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Competing interests

None declared

