

Interview from Prick of the Spindle Editor, Cynthia Reeser

If you could say that there is something that is the driving force behind your writing, what would that thing or idea or concept be?

The process of thinking through words and images, the intersection and development of ideas and intuitive jumps, is compelling, revelatory, and imbued with an inherent conviction that it can lead to something very central and urgent. That's what drives the writing. That's the level of intensity I want to be repeatedly part of. Every time I write there is a sense that something important could occur, something revealing that can only happen by these means, something valuable in terms of personal awareness, something with surprising connections, a demonstration of a process by which the inside and outside can reveal each other.

It is, of course, not restricted to words. Poetry and visual art have been coequal pursuits for many years, Though writing is currently in the ascendant, the process is the same. I am fortunate in having two means of expression.

What is it that you strive for in your writing?

Coming from visual art and being self taught in poetry, I have little knowledge of poetry beyond a few Moderns, and even less of poetry's formal aspects. Many writers have a sense of what they are about. They often speak about their writing as "projects" or a conscious setting out to solve or resolve some issue, formal or personal. Most write from a background of academic and workshop training. I have none of that. I want simply to experience what happens each time I put down a few words and see what thoughts accrue and where the associated ideas take the poem. I do think words can get closer than pictures in approaching that substrate that is below the level of direct conceptualization: the biological/electrochemical complexity that is ourselves. I do not write to influence the art form or convey social messages. I write for epiphanies, for those times when the process enlarges and transforms experience.

It has been said that it is important for the writer to have a life beyond writing, something to inform and influence experience and possibly to provide a sounding board for the writing itself. What do you make of this and how do you feel it applies to you as a writer?

My compelling interest since childhood has been an enduring curiosity about what used to be called Natural History. I was an early and avid reader and drawer. I had a large world map on my wall that I studied. I collected and raised butterflies and moths; I learned the life cycles of birds, fish, amphibians and insects; I learned some taxonomy; I saved for a microscope. Those interests have only expanded. Our sensory systems, which we understand imperfectly, and from which

consciousness developed in my view, are our news of the world, inner and outer. Writing is just one way to develop those attentions. Creativity does not begin when sitting down to write or paint or compose, it is our inherent capability, but it becomes more focused at those times. Science and visual art are my informants.