

Coming Back to Self

A few days ago I heard a knocking at my kitchen window. About every ten seconds it would sound again. Actually it was more like a thud. I looked out the window. A beautiful male cardinal was repeatedly thrusting himself headlong against the windowpane. Then he would fly away but soon return with renewed resolve to get to something he saw through the window. As I watched I became aware of his reflection in the window! Did he think that “other” bird was a long lost brother or a rival suitor for his mate? Little did he know he was trying to “come back to himself”!

Not a bad plan, especially for those who imbibe in the arts. But what does it mean, “coming back to self,” especially with respect to writing poetry? For me, it means becoming aware of my experiences in the present moment.

In our lives today, our attention is divided and subdivided by a chaotic world and by choices we make. To “come back to self” is to be firmly grounded in the present moment and in our own current experience. From this position we can be sensitive to the “singing of the muse,” for they sing in present tense and in the language of imagination (figures of speech, etc.), for this is the language of poetry. It is in coming back to self that we are enabled to most fully hear, interpret, and use our poetic “native tongue.”

I offer these thoughts for your reflections.

And I must give credit to the cardinal at the window for his determination and persistence, but watching him gives me a headache!

Peace and poetry,
John

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