

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

In the Fullness of Life

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, December 11th, 2019

“The lost sequence in a life, they say, is the thing we always search out.”
(Michael Ondaatje, **Warlight**, M&S, 2018)

The best years of our life

If these years, according to Victor Hugo, are the ones lying ahead and are yet to be lived, it would be because we are able to project unto them past experiences of plenitude, *of the fullness of life*, when we experienced being whole and at one with the world.

I associate the following three sketches with such experiences.

Family picnic at Seward Park, Seattle, May 1973



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Around the moment of my leaving the Pacific Northwest for Montreal, I took a walk to Seattle's Seward Park on Lake Washington with my sketchbook.

An African American family group had found a place under a tree to sit and picnic. At a respectable distance I sat on the grass and sketched them from the back as they sat in a circle looking toward the lake.

One cannot think of Seattle without that lake and that park, among others, allowing one to take in the full meaning of the “Evergreen state” logo stamped on automobiles plaques.

I was about to leave that city that had welcomed me as a refugee-immigrant, and who, now a naturalized citizen, had found in African American culture something of what I had lived in my native country.

In the fullness of the moment I was saying goodbye, again.

Beached sail boats at Harwich Port, MA, July 1979



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A first ocean-side vacation on Cape Cod ... the white sand, the weather-beaten tree trunk post, the tall grass and the slick racing sail boat as foreground to the ocean and its horizon, spoke to me of a naked desert-side beach, from my past, that had been Americanized ... as I had also.

Sketching the scene seems, with hindsight, to have served as a reminder of the fact that although my perceptual filters had been Americanized I lived a superimposition of emotions, yet more in synthesis than in contradiction.

The scene did not feel strange ... it was a centering experience.

“Art stuff” at the center of my table, Montreal, July 2019



“Art Stuff” at the center of my table, Montreal, July 2019

A forty year fast forward to take stock of the realities of having down sized, as manifested by my sketching utensils moved from a work table to the center of an all-purpose dining table.

In the past the center of that table would have been given to fruits or miscellaneous objects, such as keys or sun glasses or rolls of film, which became the subject of countless sketches, done in moments of feeling one with them.

To sketch my art utensils seems to act as a subtle harbinger of the fact that what is to produce a sense of fullness of life, in the future, may have yet to be discovered in new centering experiences.

Footnote

The inspiration for this post was found in the latest film of Claude Lelouche titled “*Les plus belles années de la vie...*”

Credit all drawings to Maurice Amiel

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