

June 24, 2020

The days and nights have been wonderful, haven't they? I enjoy weather and usually do not complain even in extremes because I complain about so many other things and weather is just weather, so I try to live peacefully with that because lots of other things disturb my peace and I need some smooth sailing, too.

Tuesday, I finished one of the most important books I have ever read, and I delayed finishing it because I found it to be so important for me. The book is, *The Years* by Annie Ernaux, it is important not for the content as much as for the example, the style of her writing, and what she writes about.

I will read again.

It is not fiction nor is it exactly a memoir or journal. There are no chapters but there are spaces between paragraphs and sentences. It is a translation into English.

I am not exactly sure why I find it to be so important but I will not give it away. In recent years I have developed a practice of giving some books that I read and mark up with notes and dates to a young friend but I will not do that with this book as I think this book needs to be read by people who are nearing the end of the flight and approaching the runway of the airport at what happens next.

Annie Ernaux does make terrific observations on our lives over the course of 70 years and she has spot on insights to so much of what has become important but really isn't important at all, the story is essentially her story, a story of her thoughts on the events of her life as she remembers them and writes about them from her birth in 1940 until her retirement in 2007.

It is a "anamnesis," a making present of the past in the present and I know that sounds weird and we are not at all accustomed to thinking that way, but what she does with her life is what our celebrations of The Eucharist are intended to be.

Each Mass is or can be, a making present of a past moment, a real time happening, in the present, a real present.

Now I know with all the emphasis on the priest and his flitting about all dressed up and the notion of obligation and the terrible music and preaching and art that is so typical of most Catholic's experience of Mass that it has become a private religious experience at best and for many, a public social experience that they look forward to with little connection between the two.

The theory behind Catholic Liturgy is that there are connections made between, if you will, time and eternity, a real connection that is not just about someone surviving death and being in heaven but the whole of what encompasses a moment in time, a whole moment in time that is redeemed and offered in thanksgiving to the Mystery that some of us call Father God who is beyond time, for want of better words.

Ernaux is not a believer and she is an astute critic of Catholicism in France, but she is profoundly honest in remembering her life. As with many, it isn't that they are not believers, it is just that what they have been offered to believe is such dribble, unintelligent ideologies perpetuated by immature, co-dependent, and sensory deprived males, for the most part, that have nothing in common with the Biblical vision of time and eternity or the actual experience of real people.

The book isn't for everyone because she lived in France, mostly in Paris all her life, so many of the details of her memory are situated in the context of French politics and history, but for many in my age range, you might find the reading of this book to be a inspiration for assessing your own life.

If you are looking for something to watch that I think was very worth my time, I suggest Ann on PBS Great Performances. It is a one woman show about Ann Richards the Democratic Governor of Texas in the mid 90's. I found it on You Tube but it may still be available on the PBS website or WTTW website.

If you have AMAZON Prime, I think you would enjoy a two movie series in Italian with English subtitles, Mid-August Lunch and Salt of Life. They are pleasant and realistic glimpses into the life of a middle-aged unmarried man who lives in Rome with his mother. They are inconsequential in the long run but a nice diversion.