

A Christmas Reflection – 2016

Kevin Convery
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“I’ll be seeing you in all the old familiar places. I’ll be looking at the moon, but I’ll be seeing you.”

“I’ll Be Seeing You”

As the end of the year approaches; as the holiday lights warm and brighten my house, which is no longer home to a growing child, I can’t help being reminded of all the familiar places that have subtly changed. The ghosts of younger versions of my friends and family still inhabit them, whispering of life stages left behind.

2016 has been one of the most “challenging” years of my life, a year of “losing, leaving and letting go.” A number of friends have been compromised by illness. Others have passed away. I went through a serious prostate surgery last April myself. And, of course, there was the presidential race, which brought into livid focus some of the nasty divisions of a nation grown older.

In October’s National Geographic I read an article about the massive influx of refugees (the highest rate in Europe) into today’s Germany, and its cultural, psychological impact. The Germans, it seems, have popularized an interesting word, “Überfremdung,” a term that tries to capture the feeling of one’s homeland having changed beyond recognition, an unsettling sensation of un-famili-arity.

Although the context is very different, on a personal level I have a sense of what the word implies. I too feel a loss of the home I once knew. The world has shifted somehow, and my place in it. I feel ambushed every few weeks by the sudden realization of how much has passed of my lifelong visit here. I am trying hard to still look forward while appreciating all that has been. As the writer Mitch Album put it, in our later years “we learn to dance with memory.”

So at Christmas I simultaneously grieve and celebrate all those bygone, unrepeatable moments of beauty that this one way trip through earth and time has unfolded in its long course. It’s been quite a journey.

I hope your Christmas season will be blessed with warm, lovely experiences, and by the bittersweet dance with memory!

Merry Christmas Kevin