

NARRATIVE: A JOURNEY

I

Narrative is possible through language, the most glorious of human achievements: our ability to utter words, write words and receive words. Words are tools for opening our minds and narrate. Narrative and tales are necessary and transcendental in our life because they make us empathize and communicate with others. We used to convert experiences into stories to explain ourselves. Every person could ask what and how has been the impact or influence of narration in our lives. In what manner narratives are important to define our existence? I consider narration as an expedition: a personal ride. Telling and being told events and stories, whether they are true or false, is part of our human condition. This text expresses my journey on this subject.

II

My first narrative experience was when I was four or five years old and it was through my maternal grandmother. In those times, I shared the bedroom with her. She used to tell me the stories from the Bible before we went to sleep. Every night she chose a different tale and with her own words and told me a story. I remember lying on the bed amid the nocturnal peace and her charming voice narrating those beautiful stories. She did not stop narrating until I completely fell asleep. She did not know that a lot of nights, her stories continue in the mist of my dreams. My grandmother has to do a lot with my fascination of narrative. She made me imagine and conceive paradises, deserts, towns, floods, plagues and extraordinary lives. I was marveled and absorbed by the plots, the events and the emotional responses they provoked. My grandmother was a great storyteller. She brought to life, with words, the scenes she narrated, her beautiful

descriptions of the landscapes and her portrayal of people. I was not really interested by the lessons of the stories. If my grandmother would be alive, she would be disappointed because I never became a religious person like she was trying to guide me; instead, I was involved with the idea of storytelling.

III

I spent my childhood in a very little town of Mexico where people were mostly worried about money in order to live and where they did not create much more of what was essential. There were no libraries, bookstores or movie theatres in my hometown, but it had a lot of oral narratives. People used to spend their warm afternoons talking. In the doorways of the houses, groups of friends sat around drinking something refreshing and counting legends, astonishments, gossips, deaths and appearances, and other singular episodes from the town. It was not really a peaceful place. It started to flourish drug cartels and to change the dynamic of the community. People created stories about it. They transform common people in fiction characters. That was its way to no forget them. The tradition in that town was always to talk, to narrate and to invent stories. It was a necessity to add lies to real life and to decorate and expand it. It was impossible to live there without being surrounded by tales.

Unfortunately, there were not books in my house. It was also my grandmother that gave me my first book. In midsummer, she traveled to one of the main cities of Mexico and bought me my first printed narrative. She knew I was astonished by tales and she thought it would be the best gift for me. Indeed, it was. This was an illustrated *Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne. I immediately got engaged by the adventures, the prehistoric animals and the natural hazards that face the characters. I enjoyed the excitement of entering a space altogether different from my small world. It

allowed me to experience a wider world. It helped me to dream, to imagine and to create alternate scenarios. Like Rousseau expressed, “the world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless.” I remember reading several times the story by Verne over the course of that summer. When it was very hot, I would go to my room, stretching out on my bed, I would read the same story over and over.

IV

Later, my most appreciate discovery in my infancy was a small newsstand close to my home. I remember I saved money to buy comics and romantic stories magazines. When my mom found out I was reading those magazines, she prohibited me to read them because “they were for adults and contain matters that I would not understand.” I continued reading them in secret. I was hypnotized for their stories of love and passion, the desires, jealousy, sacrifices, betrayals, provocations, feelings, states and attitudes that love could induce. It was for these tales that I had my first notions of love and that I had the wish to fall in love.

V

It was definitive that my infancy was to focus on narrative in several ways. The time that my whole family would gather was at night for dinner and watching the last soap opera of the day. During the weekends, my parents, my sister and I watched some movies because in our town there were no entertaining places. In my room, name it fortress; I spent the afternoons surrounded by comics, toys and an old music player. My only way to play was creating stories with my action figures. I created villages, I named characters and I invented different stories with them. I did not have many friends in my early years, but narrative was always present and helped me to feel less alone. It is nowadays one of my favorite companions. When friends and family have been missing, I look anxiously for a book or a movie

to fill the gaps and make it less painful in my solitude. It has been so charming this companion that sometimes I have preferred it than the real people. Narrative makes us social, but it has the opposite effect, too. We could be tied to it.

VI

Furthermore, my family moved to a big city because my parents wanted a better life for my sister and me. It was there where I spent my youth and where I could expand my interest for narrative and made other important discoveries. At that time when I was ten years, it was the first time when I went to a cinema and to watch a play in a theatre. Since then, these two worlds, movies and plays, where narrative is the main element, have captivated me so much. The world of films with its wide screen where *all of life's riddles are answered* and the world of theatre with the use of live performers to present a story and in which a *human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being*.

VII

In school I was introduced to the classic books of literature, but it was until I met one of my best friends, a literature teacher, that I really loved it. He introduced me to the modern Latin literature. I read Vargas Llosa, Garcia Marquez, Fuentes, Rulfo, among others. Literature is a tree where a branch takes you to other one. A book led me to other one. That has been the way I have discovered so many wonderful worlds and stories and through these that I have had the wonderful possibility to be Don Quixote fighting with mills, Odysseus on a journey back home, Dante traveling through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, Emma Bovary having adulterous affairs, Hamlet having revenge, Dr. Frankenstein making experiments or Howard Roark constructing buildings. Narrative has allowed me to expand my simple and mediocre life and being others. Living loves that true life never would give

me. Reality is poorly done. Fiction has helped me with my disappointment about life. Life does not fulfill all of my dreams but fiction can. I have had to admit it that I will never be a rock star. I will not be an actor, or a painter. That is for real life, but I know it would be different in the narrative world. It works a parallel life.

VIII

Two years ago I decided to move to the United States. My stay in this country has allowed me to know a bit of the American literature. Particularly, the Odyssey Project has exposed me to astonishing narratives. This class *Speculation and Narrative* has made wider the possibilities of narrative.

It is going to be unforgettable the film *Rashomon*, by the genius Akira Kurosawa, which celebrates fiction and the imaginary tales. "I don't care if is a lie as long if it is entertainment" says a character in the movie. It has been also decisive this class for my appreciation in the great significance of utopias and dystopias tales. I have comprehended their value for their reflexive, inspiring and warning elements. They are tales that tell us who we are and who we should be. They are the description of a reality different from the existing. Utopias / dystopias are the expression and a specific form of man to face reality: divergent thinking. The world without utopia is a world without alternative. A world of tyranny. Utopia is an optional element to reality.

IX

Narrative has been crucial for me to live life in a different way. It has sharpened my sensibility, awaked my critical thinking, building my skills for listening and empathized with the struggles of my fellow human beings. It has taught me about human motivation and psychology. Narrative has developed my faculty for imagining the outcomes of various choices I made. It has influenced me the way I think and feel about my own life and encourage me to take a hard look at myself, my values, and my behavior. Narrative is doing all these yet.

Narrative has helped me to survive life, too. It has saved me in a lot of difficult times. It has worked like a medicine, a treatment, and an escape form the hard reality, a sacred refuge when reality is too hard. I remember me lying on the floor of the hospital where my mom was convalescent on her bed. It was one of deepest depression moments of my life. She was clutching at a wooden Christ and praying for her life, while I was holding a book, imploring to let up my concern, getting lost in those words and to find peace in other reality. For a few moments, I found it.

X

Narrative is found in all forms of human creativity and art, including conversation, speech, writing, songs, film, television, video games, photography, theatre, dance and visual arts that describe an event. The stories are all around us. They are everywhere. We learn from them, talk about them and live through them. I want to live among narrations. I have been living like that my whole life and I have the deepest desire to continue in the same way. I think I could not live without narrative. I want to die listening, reading or watching one. I happily welcome the new stories that are coming in my life. I hope for many and good ones. That would make me very fortunate.