

Exploring Identity and Voice Through Personal Narrative

Student Name

Institute Name

Instructor Name

Course Name and Number

Date



Exploring Identity and Voice Through Personal Narrative

I have always used storytelling to make sense of the world, whether as a kid writing in a journal or as a college student performing spoken word poetry in the college cafes. Writing has not just been a mirror, but a map, as we reflect on who we are and what we are exploring in terms of what we want to become. I have since discovered that the power of personal narrative could affect people when I wrote about being a first-generation student in a language that was not always mine. It was at that moment that I recognized that this could be a way to survive and establish my identity. In my work, the use of creative nonfiction and memoir has taught me that I can use language as a means of recovery in addition to a form of communication. I am currently pursuing a graduate degree in order to improve my art, enhance my knowledge of the voice, and learn more about the role of narrative in creating identity and social memory.

Navigating Dual Identities Through Narrative

I have never had an identity as a single person. Being a bilingual child and assuming two cultures with two sets of ideals and norms that I was expected to act within, I felt at times caught between two narratives. Writing, however, allowed that distance to weave these strands together into a store. It was then in college that I started working on displacement, hybridity, and family silence. My essay, *Salt in the Sugar Jar*, e.g., considers how culinary rituals in immigrant families work against forgetting the emotional memory. I wanted to convey the non-sequential manner in which we acquire identity through the use of metaphor, texture, and the disjointed structure. Such explorations were greatly informed by the works of such writers as Ocean Vuong and Carmen Maria Machado, who turn to genre-playing forms to address complex truths. They made me understand that being vulnerable in writing is not a sign of weakness- vulnerability is an act of

revolution, exposing oneself as well as others to connect with and be exposed to real-life (Vuong, 2019).

From Personal to Collective Memory

I came to this topic with personal experience in mind, but over time, I have become far more interested in what may be referred to as the mutual translation of individual narrative and collective memory. What is the relationship between the narrative of an individual and those of the society or generation at large? One of my oral history interviews was done during a summer fellowship when I was interviewing refugees in my home region. Writing down their narratives, I was struck hard by narrative ethics--to what extent we put voices of others into frames, and what should be our right to make the frames. This project encouraged me to stop writing about identity and start writing, through it, interrogating voice as a form of self-expression and political gesture. Where the voice of the marginalized tends to go unnoticed, I find personal narrative as a way of resistance, as it takes the power back and gives a new meaning to showing up (Smith & Watson, 2010).

Craft, Collaboration, and Literary Experimentation

I am now keen on the research in other forms, especially the lyric essay, autofiction, and the hybrid memoir, as well as to work with colleagues and instructors who are equally concerned with the politics of narrative. I am interested in your program because of its focus on writing as an experimental and collaborative practice, learning through mentorship, and the community of writers. I am particularly interested in seminars devoted to narrative theory and courses on cross-genre storytelling. I also hope to be able to do some teaching alongside this, as a teaching assistant, to be able to help other people find their voice as I continue to develop my own. It is a

communal process to write. It is in the mode of conversation, that is, with the readers, with the self, and with the traditions and inventions that constitute literary art and its crafts (Cavarero, 2000).

Conclusion

I write because I need to identify myself, but I also write to reach out. To fight the cancellation. Not to be simplified. With the help of this program, I am looking forward to furthering or enlightening my mind on how personal stories become cultural texts, how I become we. Masters Degree study will provide me with the methodology through which I can interrogate my endeavor further, and write not only truthfully, but purposefully. Within each individual story, there is a chance of change, with the author and reader too. I am prepared to start the next phase of my life.

References

- Cavarero, A. (2000). *Relating narratives: Storytelling and selfhood*. Routledge.
- Smith, S., & Watson, J. (2010). *Reading autobiography: A guide for interpreting life narratives* (2nd ed.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Vuong, O. (2019). *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. Penguin Press.

