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Abstract

In looking at my life, I can say that although I have had a difficult introduction to reading, writing and finding my voice in my early years I have grown and continue to grow to love literature, music, poetry. Digital technologies have changed the world before my eyes almost overnight and I have to admit it is hard to survive without it nowadays. This piece follows my journey to just trying to understand it all and deciding to pursue writing in my career.

Tech-Lit Narrative

Growing up my life was full of words, tradition, rules and stressing the importance of my understanding of these things. When I was born my mother was young and single, she raised me with the help of my grandmother who basically taught me everything I knew as a child. I always loved writing, drawing and playing games on the computer but had a tough introduction to reading. Throughout the years, I have grown to love language and literature so much I have decided that it should pursue it in my career. I couldn’t imagine not speaking, writing or typing my thoughts to share with others. It is something that I believe is my purpose in life and even considering anything else is completely out of the question. This essay will document my challenges and difficulties throughout my life to my overall respect for orality, literacy and technology.

As a child, my grandmother taught me the values of being polite, respectful and being seen and not heard. She was very religious making sure to teach me how to say my prayers every morning when I woke up and every night before I went to sleep. In school, what I can remember about reading and writing is the importance of drawing and being able to write our names and the alphabet in class and read it back to ourselves and the teachers. At home, I would play some educational games on my leapfrog but my favorite thing to do was watching cartoons on television. I would watch TV every day after school in the afternoon and even more on the weekends. My issues with reading became a reality to me when I was held back a year in the first grade because I was not at the same reading level as the other children in my class. Upon hearing that I was going to have to repeat a grade because of my reading my mother and grandmother became adamant in making sure I was practicing my reading and penmanship at home. My grandmother would make me read scriptures from the bible every day and brought books to teach me how to write in script and use the correct spacing between my words. The following year, I remember taking a reading test online and having to read aloud the words in a book to the teacher testing me. I had to prove that after a repeating the grade that I was now reading at a proficient level. Upon passing that test and moving on in elementary school, I realized that reading would only be enjoyable if I focused on my interests and the things I liked to learn about then chose stories and books based on that.

As the years went on, I focused much more on reading, writing and academics. In reading things that interested me I found that I could jump into a story just like I would with a tv show. I could experience things from a character’s point of view, see what they see, feel their emotions and experience what the character experienced as if it actually happened to me. In my head, I would question why the characters reacted to things the way they did and what I might do in those same situations, it was like having a second life outside my normal one. This sense of wonder stayed with me through junior high school, although when I got to high school I felt as if this love of great adventure in the form of books became something reserved only for when I had excess time on my hands. But when I did read I longed for stories that would allow me to step out of myself for a moment imagine everything differently. I needed something that would leave me on the edge of my seat eager to get to the next page find out what was going to happen next. When I finished a book or story I would feel accomplished but sad as if going through some type of withdrawal, it was because of this that I sometimes read more than one book at a time so I would never lack adventure in my life. In reading things that didn’t interest me at all I realized that I would have to change my attitude towards those them. I would always look for something interesting in a text anything to keep my focus even if my sole motivation for finishing it was just to get it over with. I knew that I never wanted to experience being left behind again because I wasn’t trying hard enough or I chose not to do something just because I didn’t like it. I had always felt a faint sense of awareness upon graduating elementary school that my education would be in my own hands. It wasn’t until getting into high school that I realized that my education was just about the only thing I would be able to control in my life. The education that I chose to take or not take advantage of would determine whether or not I reached my aspirations and success in life.

In addition to those issues I was a very quiet and emotional child, I wore my heart on my sleeve and thought it was more important to be liked and accepted then speaking my mind. I had had built up this impression of myself that because of the fact that I was a short and quiet girl that I’d fade into the background, that I wasn’t anything to worry about or even pay attention to, this impression was hard to get away from. I learned through experience that my voice was an important tool in my life if I wanted to be heard and acknowledged, especially considering people’s impressions of me based on my stature. In my first high school, I remember having to take a public speaking class and thinking it would be a great challenge and my worst enemy. By this time, I had become much more vocal in voicing my opinion but still felt uneasy reading in front of my class. I remember having to read aloud a detailed essay that I had written in class and reading it so fast that my audience was not able to hear the emotion had in my writing. I also remember many other instances of stumbling with words when having to speak in public on a topic. It was because of my mistakes that I had gotten stronger in this field as well as in my writing.

Looking back on my memories with orality and writing up until this point it’s hard to decide if I favor one over the other I would have to say that it would depend on my feelings at the moment. I might write a detailed and well thought out masterpiece and by the time I have to read it decide to only mention a few key points and fill the rest of the speech based on what I know and feel so that it would sound more genuine and relatable as I spoke. I would also say that my writing and speaking style comes from the music I listen to, I am very versatile in the genres I like but mostly I love hearing music with a purpose or emotion behind it. The purpose doesn’t have to be something serious or life changing it can be as simple as a beat that makes you feel like dancing, drinking and having a great time not worrying about the issues in life. In emotion, I feel like there will always be a song to express exactly how I feel at the moment or even if need to hear something to force me to feel anything at all. When it comes to my speech and writing, I feel it should have two main functions if nothing else, a purpose and an emotion.

In deciding to become a writer I have to say I have developed a love-hate relationship with technology, it can be the most amazing and frustrating thing in the world. From my childhood, I can remember worrying about simple technology such as the being able to tell time with an analog clock or using a typewriter. Then everything changed, it seemed like I woke up one day and computers, laptops and phones were an essential thing in my life. It was as if these things were now telling me how to think, talk and express myself in all aspects of my life. One of the creations of technology that I also maintain a love-hate relationship with is my social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram. I use my social media accounts to express my thoughts on feelings on various subjects and share moments in my life with friends and family. The thing that I hate about my social media account is when certain posts come up about topics that I view as negative, inappropriate or should stay private. This along with other points of how technology has invaded and changed our culture was one of the topics discussed in Neil Postman’s “From Tool-Using to Technocracy”. After reading Postman’s views and observing the connections to social media apps I feel that people are giving too much of themselves away on social media for the world to see, the public should not be able to tell everything about a person based on their Facebook or Instagram page. It diminishes the purpose of human contact, what is the point of getting to know someone up close and personal if you can find out everything down to where they live with the click of a button?

People have influenced my attitude toward the use of social media in teaching me to stay a mystery. I learned not to give too much information away because not everyone online is a friendly person and those same people can use your information and things they assume about you based on it against you. Also anyone really interested in knowing you won’t have a problem doing it in the form of a private message or in a personal non-social media related way. However, I do believe that social media along with other unconventional modes of communication will be an important thing in the future because of the audience it can reach. But I must keep in mind the consequences of technology, online communication and social media as I mentioned before and as I read in another text by Neil Postman “The Judgement of Thamus” information can be a tool and a weapon that can be used against us also anything written or typed is up for interpretation by anyone. In other words, a person may take something completely wrong based on the level of knowledge and relationship if any to the writer, this can often be the opposite of the intend meaning.

Finally, I have to say that I have reached a sense of respect and acceptance in my relationship with orality, literacy and technology. These are the factors that govern the world we live in today. Although I do not know what the future holds but I can say that orality, literacy and technology will continue to move forward and show us things beyond what we can see in front of us or possibly even imagine.