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A Narrative History: Theories on Why I Write

For all the stories and perspectives shared on life as an immigrant, one of the more elusive of them is the privilege of being multilingual. I was just an infant when my parents immigrated to Miami from Brazil. I have lived here ever since. I'm more American than I am Brazilian. So much so, I think in English. Fortunately for me, my parents insisted that I exclusively speak Portuguese with them, whether we were at home or in public. They were particularly adamant that I speak had to speak Portuguese fluently. Their usual argument for this would be something along the lines of, "How else will you communicate with your grandparents?" I'm glad they took that stance. It has paid off countless times, but we can address that in a moment.

So, there I was, six years old, fluent in English, Spanish and Portuguese, as a result of my parents' righteous efforts to raise a child who would hopefully, someday, be prepared for the world. My father moved around a bit as a child, and therefore, he spoke English, Spanish and Portuguese as well. My mother on the other hand, spoke Portuguese, a bit of Spanish, and only somewhat understood English. Whenever friends came over to our house, unless my dad was present, I automatically became a translator. Given how dependent children are on adults, and the fact that my father would occasionally work on Saturdays, this happened often. I quickly

learned that messages can be expressed with different tones and their meanings could be slightly altered to my advantage.

Why do I bring this up? What does this have to do with my propensity for literature and composition? In my mind, it was significant.

From an extremely early age, I was shown that every person has a vastly different perspective from the other. What is funny in Spanish, for example, might not be that big of a laugh in Portuguese. As a child, I was granted access to otherwise secret remarks and conversations in grocery stores. If that Brazilian couple thought you were speaking too loud on the phone, not only did I agree with them, but I knew exactly what they thought about you for doing so. I was given this secret lens into little moments of other people's lives. These glimpses did not only train my observational skills and my awareness of others and human interaction, but they were enough to spark my imagination infinitely.

Once I realized that I could have the same amount of fun and escapism with printed words on paper, it was pretty much a wrap. While my mother had to work at a very young age and was not able to get an education past high school in Brazil, due to her family's financial status, she was and continues to be whip smart. Despite my obsessive inclination toward soccer, she noticed how much I enjoyed books and comic strips. She made sure to always keep plenty of them around.

All of this is to say that I kept something to read nearby from an early age. In order to explain why one writes, it is necessary to first reveal why one reads.

My knack for reading started to pay off when it came time to turn in book reports in school. Years later, this earned the occasional comment of praise by my teachers. I might not have been the smartest student in my class, but whenever there were essays to write in English

class, you could bet that I would be ready to put mine up against anyone else's. It was not until late in high school, when my English teacher had us write an essay about the symbolism found in *The Great Gatsby* that I was truly aware of how much I enjoyed writing. Despite my having read the book, I was the very last one to finish. I did not want to stop exploring the metaphors that Dr. T.J Eckleberg's eyes presented. I genuinely cherished proving why I understood that F. Scott Fitzgerald laid out a narrative not only about love and desperation, but about the American dream.

At this point in my life, I had no idea what I wanted to study in college. I was playing at a very competitive level of soccer for my age. Due to the lack of counseling at my high school and my parents' ignorance to the American college system, I genuinely believed the only way I would get into a decent school would be through soccer.

Two years later, I was halfway through my sophomore year at a sub-par school on a soccer scholarship. The school truly did not provide any scholastic advantages to its students whatsoever compared to say, a community college. It was small, a good 40-minute drive from my parent's place, and frankly, those who were not attending on an athletic-based purpose, were the targets of several inquiries within mental interviews I would conduct while daydreaming in a class that was likely not challenging enough to merit my attention, or so I thought back then. I believed I was better than average at writing, so I decided to study communications. I wanted to study journalism, but the school did not offer a journalism program. Such was the depth of my research toward their academic benefits.

The problem then became the steady transformation of my relationship with soccer, from a burning first love to a crumbling and false relationship. In fact, I quickly went on to resent the sport. There were days when the sight of the training field made me want to puke. The once

beloved smell of freshly cut grass or brand-new Nike Mercurial Vapors, began to induce massive amounts of stress and anxiety. I began faking injuries in practice and pretending to be sick in order to avoid playing altogether.

One day, I was called into the coach's office. The Spring season had just ended, and it was customary for him to hold on-on-one interviews with each player at the beginning and end of each season. As I strolled into the Athletics Department building, I was nervous. My palms were sweating. Like my relationship to soccer, my relationship with coach had seen better days. At the beginning of that fall season, what was set to be my breakout year, things went south rather quickly between the coach and me. You see, I had a solid freshman year and showed plenty of potential to eventually be on the team's leaders. It's true, I did perform well throughout my freshman year, despite a couple of injuries, I still had a couple of assists and one goal to my name. But that was then. "You don't have heart," he yelled at me as I failed to make an adequate time in our preseason Cooper Test. The Cooper Test was a fitness test conducted usually during preseason, where players are expected to run two miles in less than 12 minutes. For the most part, everyone passes. I was one of the very few who failed the test that fall, and Coach was disappointed to say the least.

I gently knocked on the door, just below a plaque which had his name inscribed. Underneath, read "S. _____'s University Men's Soccer Coach." He was an intense man. Most coaches are. As I sat down on one of the two chairs opposite his desk, our eyes met, and his demeanor seemed familiar to me. He had the same demeanor he would get before he was getting ready to rip someone apart verbally after having failed to complete an overlapping run or tracking back on defense. He did not beat around the bush. "As of right now, you are not included in my plans for next season." His peculiar accent, forever engrained in my memory. He

was born in Latvia but went to college at Indiana University and has lived in South Florida since the early 2000s. The feeling of being told I was essentially kicked out of the team took several hours, if not days, to kick in. On the one hand, I was honestly a bit relieved to have this weight off my shoulders and the decision to end this unhealthy relationship once and for all, made for me. On the other hand, I was extremely ashamed and to this day, I still feel a bit of guilt from not going all the way through with the commitment I made when I accepted a scholarship.

The subsequent years consisted of a massive identity crisis which I did not even realize I was going through. My whole life, I related to this future image of playing soccer professionally. Now that the mirage had faded, what was next? I found solace in reading. I flat out escaped my reality. I graduated college with an undergraduate degree in Journalism, but my grades were awful. My dream was over, so what did it matter what my GPA was in college? I drowned myself in mystery novels, Salinger, Hemingway, Vonnegut and more.

While these were fantastic distractions, the inner turmoil and depression caused by my first real bad break-up (after all, soccer was my first love), proved to be too much and led me to seek counseling. As a coping exercise, I began to jot down my feelings and thoughts and it helped a great deal. It did not take too long for me to take the natural next step and write fiction for my own entertainment. In an odd way, I felt like a child, who was re-learning to use his creativity. I was reconnecting with that imagination that would conjure up back stories from all the men and women I would pass while my parents were at the mall or in the grocery store.

Writing more led to reading more. The more I read, the more I understood how much more there is to learn. In my pursuit to escape my reality and immerse myself in literature, I was humbled. This humility inspires me to wake up that inner child who had a blast making up

stories in his mind. My love for this new world which saved me from an identity crisis has led me here. I would be lying if I said I knew exactly what I intend to do with my master's degree.

Maybe I will teach. I believe it is one of the most noble and admirable things someone could do. Maybe I will continue to write for online publications. Maybe someday I can get a book published and dedicate it to my mother, who always gave me something to read. Either way, I intend on writing through it all. When I am sad, angry, elated, confused, curious, bored and everything in between. I feel a bit empty every day that I do not write.