

Reflection on Young Adulthood: A Narrative Memoir with Scholarly Analysis

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People say that inside every truthfully matured and genuine adult, there is an adolescent. This certainly applies to me too. In an academic season that starts in the autumn through spring, summer and with a lot of “adult” flavors in both societal and personal lives, the continuation of reflexive narrative about teenage days and adolescence remains a pleasure of mine—even though that particular period, in high school and adolescence, has been way over a decade behind me now.

Reflective Memoir: The Significant Moments That Defined My Adolescence

We want to learn from an early life experience because there is something that can benefit some of us. In my case, it was not singular nor was it extraordinary but rather some progressive routines which added up to a culmination of my personal growth. In the autumn of 2007 I was set free from a completely home-based secondary student life after three years of junior high through a rather complex peer school environment, and started a urban high school journey as a boarding student to begin with. Living in dormitory rooms with seven other schoolmates was a fresh experience of quite a few of us, and while for many new, aspiring young teenagers who got into this new embedded urban environment it was an excitement—many opportunities to socialize and learn from different peer students, and beyond—for me it was merely nothing but a continuation of introversion and suffocated immersion into another new school. I was, however, able to make up my mind to explore my dorm and campus, expecting to achieve at least several simple goals for high school: making some new friends, learning a new sport such as basketball, getting good grades, and reading multiple books that I enjoyed as an adolescent.

It was then with such a mindset and preparation that I began the first year of my high school. I crawled, struggled reasonably hard, and nevertheless enjoyed the fresh mixture of content in the midst of which we all felt like we were newcomers. On the basketball court I was a newbie:

starting to learn the entire game from scratch, my one-on-one game was often times a humiliation to my deficient skillset, and for team games I was normally “benched”. But I learned a lot—most of my peers had something to teach me, and I found myself more and more self-aware in terms of my character and personality as I integrated into the three-year high school curriculum and activities.

The first year went on smoothly, almost calculatingly as a transitional period. On one evening, as far as I could recollect, I was reading some martial-hero fiction on my MP3 player and all of the sudden, this studious roommate of mine, Mr. Old Ryan, approached me and said to me it was bad for my eyes to do so in the dark; he never really talked to me like that, nor did he care for me in any specific scenario, but in that moment I agreed totally upon what he advised and turned off my digital device and went to sleep. That guy Old Ryan actually went on to graduate institute and became a medical doctor—somebody who actually can *help* people.

In the second year (a.k.a. sophomore) the school re-shuffled all the students into different class units: people studying science were grouped together, liberal arts, and so on. I realized that there was some change that was about to take place in this particular phase of my high school life. In the preceding first year I experienced a lot, including my grandmother’s passing away, and perhaps especially because of that I felt like a part of me was gone and I had to take a leap into a new sort of realm, otherwise I would unlikely be able to carry on this life into adulthood (yes, I did think of the future while being a young adult that I was hopefully going to “grow up” and have an independent life of my own, something like that).

So I had joined this wonderful class—full of good people, and potentially frivolous ones the type of folks whom you would never know what was on their minds—and I continued to study hard and play some basketball. The classroom atmosphere was pretty good and we all sort of like

each other; I pulled away out of the dorm rooms and began to live in my household apartment only several kilometers away from the high school. One morning, I took this extremely early bus for about ten minutes to school, coming upstairs to the classroom and thinking that I would be the first good student to arrive, but only to find out that one female student was already sitting there and keenly looking at her notebook. I thought I would step up and knock on her to say Hi, but I didn't want to disturb her. But it was since that moment I realized I had found similar people by interest in the same zone of studies.

Then the specific pivotal moment came during the second year of my high school. All students were going to this tournament of sports event in November of the autumn term, running laps or "racing" and swimming and competing athletically. Very big thing in my school. To be honest, it was always a difficult time for me to stretch up to the same athletic standard as many physically strong students were, and I was quite weak as a toddler. However, ever since junior high I started to pick up some skills in exercising; in this high school I became a fresh newbie again, and hence I thought of making a plan to build my physical shape and confidence. With the assistance of several friends of mine in my class, I decided to go for the half-mile/800-meters race in the tournament.

The training process then came; it was not a easy beginning, because I was generally weak and to compete for a good spot in the race I would need to elevate my capability to the next level. So I ran—I ran whenever I had some time after class was over in the late afternoon; with some strategy, it gradually became a habit of mine so that I got on to do it daily and I started to run faster and faster. One friend, in particular, was a constant companion to me while I did the practice, encouraging me and providing me technical advice and moral support. In about two months, my record in practice was almost two and a half minutes per 800 meters (exactly two laps in a standard

field). The tournament day came, and without much mental preparation I was going to get on and step up the challenge which I never had anticipated.

The race started in an early afternoon. I had a “conservative” start: I didn’t pull up my full strength but to follow the “crowd” in about the first three quarters of the first lap, because I knew from my training that the optimal tempo that I had was to do a “medium-fast-slow-fast” progression across the entire 800 meters—in other words, I was likely at my best when I had a relatively slow start. So I ran on. But I realized I was lagged behind a lot—nearly half of the racers in my group were ahead of me for some distance and few were even invisible from my sight, and it was already halfway through the first lap. My confidence level started to attenuate: was I being too reserved in my strength in that was my strategy way off and that I should get on my full strength and get ahead? Which strategy should I choose? But I stayed calm and ran on, following the majority of the other racers until the beginning of the second lap.

Then, something of a miracle happened. I realized that several racers began to slow down and were lagged by me; then I passed one other guy, and one more... it was too late though, for I was toward the last quarter of the second lap (that says, the final turn of the entire race) and I still could see two students/racers ahead of me just about a few meters away. I caught on, and I got closer, and then finally I ran pass both of them—it was the first spot of the whole crowd now, and I could never imagine that I was in a “gold metal position”. I sort of realized that if I kept on holding my position I would win the gold medal for real; but I didn’t really have the time to think about it, for I was too exhausted and was almost running my butt off and my heart out of the chest. I couldn’t see anything—or, strictly speaking, I saw a white screen in front of me with a vague image of the destination line, just so precise enough that I could catch the right direction. So I ran on. And I reached the destination. All of a sudden, another racer caught up on me and passed me

just right before I crossed the finishing line—so he got the number one place and I got the second (in fact, I got the bronze medal instead of a silver one, because another student in an earlier group had a faster record than mine). But I didn't care: it was already an unimaginable achievement for me for someone like me who never performed so well in a race before to come up and hold on to the front of the crowd to the very end. And, it was the best record I ever got, much better than my practices. I can still tell the numbers, precisely how many seconds I ran through the half-mile race. It was a significant memory to me since it exemplified to myself what perseverance and work-ethic could bring to my life, and to me it meant transformation and good surprises.

Thinking Again on Adolescence and Young Adult Literature

Afterwards, write an analysis for 3-4 pages of that moment utilizing scholarly texts from the class or beyond to illustrate **why this moment illustrates something specific** about the adolescent experience.

For the young adult period is for nearly six to ten years' span across a person's adolescence and early adulthood, it was not a singular task to discuss YA literature and personal development throughout the young adulthood with a narrow timespan, and hence such conversations as the ones in our course are usually broader than one single genre, theme, or socioeconomic scenario.

Having wrapped up the above memory from my own high school experience, it is, I think, the theme of *personal growth* and *individual cultivation* which it addresses and demonstrates—although it merely was an average example as I would not consider my story anywhere near extraordinary, but rather commonplace, ordinary, and simple (but it was authentic). We would have seen similar themes and specific scenarios portrayed in YA literature and media in contemporary works, too; in particular, the way the process unravels itself resembles the process of *bending* discussed by Thomas et al. as a form of restorying (Thomas, E. E. and Stornaiuolo, A.,

2016) that a story is reshaped to present a more in-depth examination and a diversity of perspectives that are missing from mainstream materials. In other words, the stories we show in these pivotal memoir moments, such as my narrative above, was not meant for “me” as the author but more about the *readers* and especially young readers who take their unique perspectives and delve into the world of another person through reading these words.

To grow up may be a dream for too many adolescents and young adults—when can I live up to my expectations, how can I be independent from my old self, what dreams do I follow... In one of the films we watched together in class this semester, the protagonist in *Eighth Grade* Kayla articulates well and sound her challenges in crawling through the process of growing up as well as being oneself; she thinks that such personal development or cultivation implies changing “something you don’t like yourself” (Burnham, B., 2018) such that certain feature or bad habit wouldn’t be “disliked” by you no more. In my story on physical perseverance in the 800-meters race, the configuration was simpler in that I was already well set and determined into the “task” which was to run through the race and run faster, and to outgrow myself out of the experience; in other real-life situations, we often would encounter the “duality” of feeling scared of growing up versus feeling that we can’t wait to grow up. Apparently, in the new generation as Kayla is in adolescents are developing their own ways to sort out the process of growth, including finding ways to express themselves like Kayla did in her routine practice of video-logging and broadcasting.

In our materials about dark fantastic and mythology, the process of growing is somehow projected as perhaps the emancipation from those Dark Others as addressed in Dr. Thomas’ 2018 article about racial differences in YA media (Thomas, E. E., 2018) such that amplifying the diverse fantasy would bring about the liberation of the rest of the fantastic from its fear and loathing of

darkness. It was proposed that five key elements—spectacle, hesitation, violence, haunting and emancipation—describe the configuration of the dark fantasy stories and the genre; through the overcome of the haunting process and the defeat of Dark Other, a purification of character is achieved as the upbringing benefit of such process.

It is in the correspondence between YA literature and media works and the realm of young adulthood where truth empathy is reached and a harmony of this unique time of life prevails. Beyond the words and genres, we read about friendship, social justice, and more growth in these stories and imaginations. Never can the possession of any particular aspect tell the full story of an individual's life, and nor can we learn enough from a single story about any conceptual topic of teenage life and young adulthood. Let us preserve this period of time and the memories and connect, every once in a while, with the literature and media works for a better understanding and the cultivation of values and inspirations.

References

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