

Obscuring Home: A Collection of Short Stories & Essays
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Many homes shape our lives, and our visions of home are often disillusioned. In narrative writing, home can be an omniscient force. Characters that are unsettled, whether that be physically or emotionally, are more interesting characters. This often means characters are seeking what the illusion of home provides: a place of belonging and contentment. Throughout the summer, I explored the interplay of home as a physical space and home as a place of both belonging and disillusion within stories and essays.

I began my work this summer by reading *Homesick for Another World*, a collection of short stories by Ottessa Moshfegh. In reading these stories, I considered the ways that Moshfegh constructs discontentment and uncertainty. I considered how her title, *Homesick for Another World*, illuminates the ways that this discontentment leads to feeling unsettled and yearning for a place that is out of reach. I began writing my stories with this disillusionment in mind; how can I construct characters that are searching for something that is out of reach, and how can home be a force for creating and disrupting belonging? These questions became the basis for my first story, about a girl and her father who live in a home that holds the unexpected in one of the basement walls.

Next, I read *The Shell Collector* by Anthony Doerr. In this collection, characters are always in motion, often between two places. The tension in many of these stories is constructed through duality. In further research about the book, I came across an interview with Doerr about how he imagines stories: "Storytelling itself is, maybe, the act of moving from one place to another, or leaving one place and returning to it once more, but changed somehow." I kept this in mind as I constructed my second story, which is about a girl who leaves home in search of belonging, and comes across a group of elderly folks who are responsible for the upkeep of a backcountry hut, which includes hunting possums. The story is also inspired by the time I spent hiking and meeting folks throughout New Zealand while abroad in the spring.

Next, I read *North Woods* by Daniel Mason. In this story, a plot of land in Massachusetts becomes witness to change throughout decades. In this sense, Mason constructs the physical home as both the setting and the protagonist in the story, as the characters move and shift throughout. This form of narrative became a motivating force for my first essay, which I wrote about the town of Henderson Harbor, where my grandfather's family has spent the summer for over a century. In this essay, I reflect upon the ways that I've seen Henderson change, and the ways that my grandfather witnessed Henderson change. Through different versions of Henderson, I imagine our relationship, and how we continue to remember and honor him today.

Lastly, I turned inward to explore the personal experiences that shaped my understanding of belonging and home throughout my childhood. In an essay I intertwine my memories of playing with my siblings with a reflection of the work I did last summer while shadowing a family legal organization. Through writing, I was able to use my own recollections of disparate experiences to formulate a stronger understanding of how homes are shaped through camaraderie, and the ruthlessness that underlies love.

Throughout the summer, I not only wrote stories and essays, but came across ideas and notions that I will continue to grow into an honors project in the fall. I am very grateful for the funding for this summer of creative writing, and exceedingly appreciative of the support from Professor Brock Clarke.

Faculty Mentor: Brock Clarke

Funded by the Nellie C. Watterson Summer Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts