

Abstract

This dissertation is a collection of creative nonfiction essays to include emotional, lyrical moments that evoke my personal history. The essays focus on my developing identity in conjunction with external influences, namely the impact of people and places. I have written essays and other short prose pieces that describe who I am in the wake of living with a very ill and addicted father; the essays circle a theme of recovery. I experienced a childhood marred by alcoholism and abuse that caused my struggles with anorexia, perfectionism, and an abusive romantic relationship in my early twenties that nearly claimed my life. Having recovered from these circumstances, I wrote about them. Memories of trauma can be painful, so I moved cautiously as I worked to describe in full detail the series of struggles I endured. My recovery from trauma was accomplished with the help of Ralph Waldo Emerson. People and texts that were disconnected from my family system became instrumental to the development of these essays. Emerson's essays, and my connections to them, are identified as a productive method for accepting my family's fate. I connected with Emerson's deep affiliation with the New England landscape, and geographical places in New England and in Kansas are also influences upon my maturation in the essays as they move forward.