

# Romulus my father

Literature



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Belonging is about finding a sense of place in the world which can be due to a strong sense of connection with others. For those who don't belong and cannot find 'their place' they are faced with problems of alienation and loneliness from others or feel estranged or in conflict with the environment. These different aspects are reflected in the texts *Romulus my Father*, Raimond Gaita and *The Island*, Armin Greder. These texts portray the concept of belonging and not belonging, whether it is to family, a relationship, place or environment.

*Romulus my Father* conveys how an individual's relationships are central to our sense of belonging and help us find natural connection whether it with environment or people. Raimond Gaita uses first person throughout the book to express his experiences as well as his mother and father's experiences of belonging to surroundings. Romulus is a migrant to Australia who 'always considered himself Romanian.' Although Romulus Gaita does not feel at home in Australia he belongs due to the connection he has with those around him.

The use of high modality verb choice suggests pleasant nostalgia about events. Most evident in Romulus's recollections of his father, 'I loved him too deeply...no quarrel could estrange us,' which displays the sense of belonging he feels with his father. This relationship is evident after Christina dies, 'we came together as son and husband with the woman whose remains lay beneath us.' Raimond's aspect of belonging is familial. Juxtaposed against Raimond's belonging is Christine's inability to belong.

Christina is ostracized by the Australian community, due to her promiscuous, unfaithful ways and inability to properly care for her son, Raimond. Christina is described as a 'troubled girl', who 'longed for company. This conveys her misfit personality, blinding her from connecting with the environment she is shown, wishing for bigger and better things she neglects those around her.

Raimond describes her as a 'dead red gum...a hundred metres from the house. This metaphor symbolizing her misery, isolation and again emphasizing her inability to connect with others and the environment she is presented with. Romulus' lack of acceptance and understanding of the environment also prevents him feeling as he belongs to Australia. Raimond says that although Romulus found Australia to be 'of rare beauty' he 'could not become reconciled to it' as he was blinded by the familiarity of his homeland, Romania. The Island depicts how individuals understanding of environment and others around them can aid the feeling of belonging.

In the opening pages of the Island salience framing is used to place the villagers in the middle of the page which conveys the superiority and unity as one group, portraying their connection. The landscaped is also the same dark ominous tone as the villagers showing the natural connection between villagers and landscape. A lack of understanding of others can limit and prevent and individuals ability to belong as depicted through Romulus my Father. Alienation is depicted through the migrant experience of the Gaita's.

Romulus struggles to find a sense of belonging with the Australian community he is presented with. This is shown through the statement that 'New Australians' were 'tolerated but seldom shown the respect they

deserved. ' Meaning that the Australian community judged the migrants based on prejudice and stereotyping, rather than taking time to understand and realize these ' foreigners' were no different to themselves. Migrants were also referred to as ' New Australians' which immediately isolated them from the locals.

This is seen further when Raimond states that the Australian community called Romulus ' Jack', rather than his real name, trying to rid him of his nationality. This attitude towards migrants is also conveyed in The Island's recounts of events caused by a foreigner who washes up on the shore of their island. Initially the islanders take care of the man but he ' is not like them and their fear creates conflict within the community about the man's place in society. The man is depicted as scrawny while the villagers are the complete opposite and built.

This visual difference highlighting the reason why islanders created barriers preventing the man from belonging. They have little empathy for someone different from themselves and don't try and make him feel welcome. The short time the man is on the island he is ostracized and neglected. When an individual experiences a strong sense of connection and association with others, their ability to belong is strengthened and enriched. In contrast, interaction with others can also halt and limit one's ability to belong. This is conveyed through texts ' Romulus my Father' and The Island.