

Belonging: romulus my father and becoming jane related text

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Fundamental to perceptions of belonging is the recognition of its complex nature encompassing both belonging and its antithetical concept of isolation. This duality, manifested in the relationship between an individual and the people and environment they are exposed to is paramount in the development of one's identity and therefore the definition of the institutions to which they may belong. The fragility and labyrinthine nature of belonging is explored in Raimond Gaita's *Romulus, My Father* through the contrasting characters of the narrator and his titular father in their experiences to assimilate to Australian culture and society.

Contrasting, Julian Jarrold's biographical drama 'Becoming Jane' illustrates the influences of society on the development of an individual's character, and further, the will of individuals to both challenge and conform to society in order to achieve a sense of belonging. Through its inherent duality, the complex notion of belonging and isolation is defined by an interaction between an individual and their surrounds. The contrasting notions of belonging and isolation are explored in Gaita's memoir through the conflicting experiences of the narrator and his alienated father.

Illustrated through the harsh and influential environment he was exposed to in his youth, *Romulus*' character, personality and morals were formed in unique circumstances, something that would later alienate him from other more conventional societies. Culturally and socially isolated in Australia, "a landscape of rare beauty, to a European eye... seemed desolate" leading to *Romulus* attempts to replicate European society in rural Australia. The acknowledgment of this isolation by the narrator that "my father could not

become reconciled to it" provides an understanding as to the difficulties Romulus' past experiences had provided him with.

Through the development of a morale code no individual, even himself could fulfil and expectations of others he realised were too high as shown through his forgiving attitude, Romulus' " character" as his " central moral concept" was evidently flawed in judging others. Contrasting, Raimond's appreciative attitude towards Australia and lack of previous cultural influence allows his to gain his identity based purely on Australian ideals and values. Contrasting however, Romulus' wife Christine, raised in a similar environment to her husband, becomes the narrator's conception of isolation s her personality, identity and value systems are not adaptable to an Australian setting. Additionally, Romulus, My Father demonstrates the significance of relationships to achieve a sense of belonging. The conformation of identity achieved through the filial bond between narrator and his father permits Raimond to gain insight into his heritage and therefore develop his identity whilst allowing Romulus to confirm his identity and reside in an aspect of society.

Illustrated through the abandoning of his youthful innocence, adoption of his fathersresponsibilityand philosophical nature and growing comprehension of Romulus' struggle to belong, Raimond's experience at the time of his fathers mental deterioration is symbolic of his growing maturity and the significance of relationships in the attaining of identity. Further, through the use of first person narration and the memoir text type, the narrator effectively reflects on the personal nature of belonging in which Romulus resides.

Illustrated through the significance of Hora on this filial interdependence, Gaita reflects on the impact of secondary characters on relationships through the imperative middle ground between the strict moral expectations of Romulus and the youthful naivety of Raimond that Hora creates. Consequently examined through his rationale to Romulus' dilemmas including that of the shaving blade, the "example" of Hora's friendship with Romulus acted as a significant influence in Raimond's development allowing him to embrace the cultural values of "honesty, loyalty, courage and charity" advocated by both men.

However, despite similar experiences between the maternally neglectful and alienated Christine and Romulus, by the conclusion of the novel, the eulogy to Romulus by Raimond reflecting on his "unhesitating acceptance", "common humanity" and furthermore the recognition of this by members of the society, portrays that Romulus was accepted in a manner suitable for a migrant in the contextual climate. Contrasting to Gaita's *Romulus, My Father*, Julian Jarrold's biographical drama *Becoming Jane* is concerned with an individual's ability to redefine themselves in order to belong to a variable society.

Through the societal and cultural relationship between Jane Austen and her patriarchal English society, a sense of belonging is preceded by an extensive experience of isolation. Illustrated by her original discontent at the ideals portrayed by her Georgian England society or marriage and suppression of individuality, Austen's feministic, professional and somewhat modern and

radical perceptions of love and sexual equality are means by which she attempts to adapt to incorporate her desires.

The acceptable notion that “affection is desirable, money is absolutely indispensable,” reflected by traditional characters of society further emphasises the female position in society and the limited institutions to which they were permitted to belong. Accentuated through Lady Gresham’s enquiring as to if “anything can be done” about Austen’s literary ambitions, Jane’s isolation from a society, which fails to cater for her needs, is expressed through a disapproval of her actions from traditionalist members of Georgian England.

Further demonstration of the significance of societal influences on the concept of belonging occurs in the final scene of the film when, whilst dressed in pure white, Austen offers to read her novel to a crowd of young girls, hence, alluding to the cyclical nature of society in which constant development and compromising of culture is caused by a constant incorporation of individual desires into a set social construct. Furthermore, *Becoming Jane* illustrates the significance of relationships in developing and maintaining identity.

Outlined by her original devotion to family, Jane’s discontent in society is a result of her changing opinions, as experiences in the relationships to which she is exposed, create a feeling of angst and dissatisfaction within the character. As relationships around her diminish as conveyed through emotional writing scenes, Jane seeks comfort in relationships absent from her original moral formation represented by her family and Lady Gresham.

Illustrated through Jane's new relationship with Tom Lefroy, Austen is able to confirm and strengthen her desire to adapt the society in which she lives. Lefroy's character's, originally black costuming gradually becomes lighter as the responder recognizes his eventual encouragement for Austen's desires. Foremost however, is Jane's decision to abandon love at the end of the film as protest to the restricting nature of her society. "The good do not always come to good ends. It is a truth universally acknowledged. Jane Austen As her desirable relationship becomes impossible due to societal expectations and formalities, Jane rejects all subsequent offers for marriage, as her values, much like Romulus', are unchanged despite societies attempts to conform them. Through this, the interaction between relationships and socially accepted relationships is explored in a manner that both alienates and accepts. The complex notion of belonging and isolation is created through an interaction between society, culture and relationships.

Through Gaita's memoir addressing the impact of society and culture on individuals and their attempts to identify themselves through relationships, Jarrold's contrasting film *Becoming Jane* addresses the more radical concept of belonging where an individual attempts to conform a society to their own needs and desires as opposed to adjusting their own character to meet societal expectations. Through the contrasting notions and concepts of belonging, this multi-faceted notion is addressed through many varied perspectives reflected through relationship, cultural and societal significance to individuals in their respective societies.