

# **The Art of Belonging**

## **Critical Reflection**

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# Introduction

- Roy Brown
- Critical reflection (theme, abstracts, literature)
- Overview
  - (1) Conditions of Belonging
  - (2) Complexities of the Concept of Belonging
  - (3) Relations individual and collective dimensions of Belonging
- Final Remarks



## Quote (Elisabeth Lowell, Remember Summer)

*“Some of us aren’t meant to belong. Some of us have to turn the world upside down and shake the hell out of it until we make our own place in it.”*



# 1 Conditions of Belonging (1)

- As many contributors have remarked: belonging is rather a psychological concept, however:
- It is: “Belonging to something” (groups, community, society, places, historical time, etc), and
- some of these entities rather stimulate belonging, others rather discourage it
- That is also underlined in the quote cited before



# 1 Conditions of belonging (2)

- Historically, disability movements and disability studies have achieved great results, however ...
- There are great differences between countries, depending on many factors ...
- Therefore, it seems now possible to consider the question of belonging, without, however, forgetting that the characteristics of the groups, communities, etc. to which one belongs have a great influence.



## Complexities of the concept of belonging

Quote (Sebastian Barry: The Secret Scripture):

*“When I was young .... I did not know that a person could hold up a wall made of imaginary bricks and mortar against the horrors and cruel, dark tricks of time that assail us, and be the author therefore of themselves”*



## 2 Complexities of the concept of belonging (1)

- Belonging is a very complex concept, and many contributors have pointed out that there are many forms of belonging, and that belonging depends on contextual factors
- Moreover, the concept of belonging (because of its individual nature) contains itself a certain number of tensions or dilemmas
- These tensions cannot be eliminated, but have to be worked out



## 2 Complexities of the concept of belonging (2)

- The following tensions can be noted:
  - (a) active / passive (example: engagement versus acceptance)
  - (b) static / dynamic (example: sense of belonging versus transformation of quality of belonging)
  - (c) factual / normative (example: the way it is versus ‘should be’)
  - (d) individual / collective dimension of belonging (example)



## Alexandre Jollien

- He has published many books, such as “Éloge de la faiblesse”. Here a quote from his book: “Le métier d’homme”:
- *“I had to learn to reconcile acting and abandoning. However, today, I am no longer afraid of this paradox: maybe, that means some progress. The paradox is visible, I can see it. Why should one resolve it at any price?”*



### 3 Relations between conditions and belonging (1)

- As noted before, belonging is a psychological concept, but it refers also to the entities to which one belongs, or
- In other words, the problem is to consider the individual nature of belonging but also the collective one to which the concept necessarily refers
- That can only be realised when considering individuals:
  - As fundamentally social and historical,
  - As interacting constantly
  - Not only at one given moment but with their biography
  - As co-creators of norms and values



# Final Remarks

- Art of belonging
- Quote
- Ingrid Baart



## Final Remarks: Art of belonging

- Art: what is it? Many characteristics and definitions have been formulated, such as: -beauty, new visions of world, monetary value, and finally, art has been conceived as just about everything that is considered as such by at least some people, or, in other words: “each art has its own public”.
- Art of belonging: there are many forms of belonging, and moreover, belonging depends on contextual factors, and is moreover inherently conflictual
- Therefore, I would say all the qualifications and definition of art can (and should) be used when considering the ‘art of belonging’, it is a kind of “wrestling with ...”



**Quote: Elisabeth Lowell: Remember Summer:**

*“Some of us aren’t meant to belong. Some of us have to turn the world upside down and shake the hell out of it until we make our own place in it.”*



## Quote (2)

- This quote summarizes quite well the central thesis of this critical reflection, because it points to the complex nature of ‘belonging’, with its dynamic character (next to the static one) and to considerations of norms and values (next to factual ones)
- Moreover, this quote applies perfectly to one person, I would like to remember here. Ingrid Baart has been involved for a long time in the struggle for disabled persons, she was at the same time full of fire but also quite vulnerable, and unfortunately she died suddenly almost two years ago. Her death is a great loss for the disability movement, and also for me personally ...



# Ingrid Baart (1952 – 2012)

