

# Longing Belonging

Be Longing Belonging Longing for Belonging Longing and Belonging Statuten der naturforschenden Gesellschaft Luzern Longing to Belong Hiraeth The Longing to Belong The Road from Fancy Monica Armstrong Naznain Khatami Shannon Booher Beth M. Crissman Helen Iles Fred Chappell Felito Jos®

Be Longing Belonging Longing for Belonging Longing and Belonging Statuten der naturforschenden Gesellschaft Luzern Longing to Belong Hiraeth The Longing to Belong The Road from Fancy *Monica Armstrong Naznain Khatami Shannon Booher Beth M. Crissman Helen Iles Fred Chappell Felito Jos®*

this thesis explores the liminality between belonging and not belonging i ask questions of belonging in childhood siblinghood womanhood and motherhood and try to understand where and how these roles and relationships intersect and influence who i am becoming this thesis is organized into four sections of personal essay belonging in childhood belonging in adulthood expected belonging and belonging in motherhood some sections are currently more robust than others sections are grounded in themes of belonging adoption infertility and connection essays overlap and inter lap with each other jumping back and forth in time while simultaneously moving forward along the thread of longing and belonging my intentions for this thesis have evolved as my essays have formed and gathered themselves into this collection i began with the intent of writing this thesis as a collection of autotheoretical essays under the theme of longing and belonging with a creative critical hybridity to them as i began to write i quickly realized that the scope of the critical creative piece would neither fit into my thesis time constraints nor be necessary in order for me to accomplish what i wanted this thesis to accomplish which is to examine and question the ways that i belong in the familial relationships that have shaped me and the ways that i long to belong in the spaces that i exist in i had mistakenly been under the impression that in order for my story to be valid i needed to fit my personal narrative inside of established critical theory but as these essays unfolded i found that my stories voices were strong and could stand alone while understanding these critical theories has been important for me in order to process and fit my personal narrative into an overarching context of longing and belonging including the theories no longer feels essential in order for me to have a voice on the page this was a freeing and also terrifying realization untethering my writing from the safety of these theories has been a brave exercise in learning how to unshield my voice this is not to say that research and critical theory is absent from this thesis i have spent many hours immersing myself in the understanding of adoption theory liminality belonging ideological state apparatuses identity formation mirror stages and genetic mirroring because i did not want to fully erase the influence of these theories and theorists from my paper i have included an epigraph before each essay that gives a nod to the

vast array of depth and context impacting my narrative my plan is to build off of this foundational piece and develop a memoir style compilation that will include these essays among many others i would like to take key features from the current essays in this thesis and expand them to include an in depth look at my relationship with my biological sister and how we belong to each other my identity formation as a 2nd generation adoptee and how that shaped my thinking regarding family identity and relationships my relationship with olivia s biological mom and how i belong and long to belong to her the lengths i took to attempt to belong in spaces i felt a spectator to analysis of how being in relationship with open adoption has personally evolved and changed over the course of time for me and analysis regarding the evolution of how both sides of our families have responded to and evolved with our open adoption relationship with olivia s biological family i will also include analyzing the way that i intentionally communicate about open adoption and identity specifically with my family of origin and when i intentionally choose to stay silent about my experience with adoption and listen to others voices which is an integral and essential component of belonging to the greater adoption community the process for this thesis has sometimes been painful sometimes therapeutic and always informative i sat a lot in my memories i wrote down core memories that seemed to shape the way i thought about siblinghood childhood identity womanhood and motherhood i talked with the people with whom i share these memories i had multiple long and meaningful phone conversations with my brother sister my parents my husband and olivia s biological mom that helped to give insight and dimensionality to what i remembered i was surprised to find that many of the core memories i had were just wisps of memories for others and that some of the key moments that impacted them were not even on my radar i guess that is how events are felt we can all be hit by the same experience but be impacted differently my biggest concern throughout this process has been how to stay in my lane i am painfully aware that my essays share space with the people that i love the very most in this world this may seem to walk dangerously close to an apology but i did not and do not take these shared stories lightly i worked and revised and edited and stewed and wept and wrung my hands and lost sleep over how to tell my perspective only how to write in a way that conveys my own flawed viewpoint my own unreliability my story is not the full story and the people i ve dragged into these essays may rightfully disagree with how i have portrayed events and memories i need to say this even if you don t think i need to say this i am aware that i am only one part of an experience as joan didion soberly reminds me that is one last thing to remember writers are always selling somebody out the other side of this coin is that if i do not tell these stories i am selling myself out

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