

ENGLISH: *SELECTED POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON*

‘An individual’s interaction with others and the world around them can enrich or limit their experience of belonging.’

Discuss this view with details reference to your prescribed text and ONE other related text of your own choosing.

The world is complex landscape, constituting of different people, discourses, paradigms and cultures, thus the experience of belonging can be paradoxical and full of tensions; between belonging and estrangement, conformity and individuality and desire and disappointment. One’s interaction with these varying people and entities of the world around them can subsequently enrich or limit their experience of belonging. Emily Dickinson poetry and Coky Giedroyc’s 2008 mini-series film *Wuthering Heights* similarly explore one’s relationship with the entities of the world, highlighting the manner in which these interactions shape our sense of belonging and are often characterised by tension.

The act of belonging to society and the larger world is often characterised by a tension between conformity and individuality, as one struggles to locate a meaningful sense of connection and belonging. In the poem ‘I had been Hungry all the years’ Emily Dickinson challenges the notion that belonging is achieved through connection to dominant paradigms, instead suggesting that a more profound sense of belonging is achieved through observation of the conventions of the group. The initial metaphor of hunger is representative of the persona’s desire to belong within society. The verb of ‘drew’ in ‘drew the table near’ displays the persona’s active attempt to connect to the dominant paradigms of society, however this is contrasted to the lexical accumulation of ‘trembling’, ‘touched’ and ‘curious’, which creates a hesitant tone and polarizes the emotions of yearning to the actual experience of belonging. As the persona conforms to belong to society and the social group, she finds it to be a sickening and discomforting experience, which she depicts through the oxymoronic quality of ‘the plenty hurt me’ and adjectives of ‘hurt’, ‘ill’ and ‘odd’. This is further enhanced by the juxtaposition of natural and societal in the simile ‘as a berry of a mountain bush transplanted to the road’, to demonstrate how the persona’s connection to society has lead to her feeling displaced and estranged, ultimately hindering her sense of belonging to self. The final statement ‘nor was I hungry’ and paradox of the verbs ‘entering’ and ‘away’, represents the persona’s discovery that she doesn’t need to enter the room/society and drink the ‘curious wine’, instead she experiences a greater sense of belonging to nature and self through observation. Therefore displaying how one’s experience with the world surrounding them can both enrich and limit different aspects of belonging.

Coky Giedroyc explores a similar notion in his film *Wuthering Heights*, through the protagonist of Cathy. Initially both Cathy and Heathcliff are framed outside the windows, mocking the refinement of society within the Grange. However this is juxtaposed to later in the film when Cathy is persistently filmed inside or looking out of the windows, representative of her newfound connection and belonging within the social world. Giedroyc, however demonstrates how Cathy’s interaction with the social world and Linton, ultimately limits her profound belonging with Heathcliff, nature and self through music, camera angles and dialogue. On Cathy’s return Heathcliff states ‘Not forgotten someone that looks like you... but someone you no longer seem to be’, this represents Cathy’s complete dislocation from belonging to self and Heathcliff, as the one who knows her best no longer recognises her. Furthermore he incorporates close up camera angles of Cathy’s distraught face, backed by sorrowful music and ominous scenery, along with the Cathy’s distraughtly crying ‘Heathcliff, Heathcliff’ to display Cathy’s lack of belonging within the social world and desire for the belonging she once had to Heathcliff, nature and self. Subsequently depicting how interactions with various people and aspects of the wider world can limits ones sense of belonging.

Furthermore, when interacting with people and entities of the wider world there are often barriers that prevent one's sense of belonging. This idea is explored throughout Emily Dickinson's poem 'This is my Letter to the World', where the persona's own fear of judgement due to previous failed attempts at connection hinders her from belonging to the social world. The metaphor of the letter and declarative tone in the opening line 'This is my letter to the world' represents her attempting to belong to the social world. However this is reversed in the past tense shaping of the following line 'That never wrote to me' to highlight a sense of previous failure of giving yet not receiving. This previous interaction with the wider world has therefore hindered her ability to belong to society due to her fear of judgement, evident through the exclamation 'Judge tenderly of me!'. However this hindrance to belong to society has allowed her to establish profound and universal belonging through nature evident through the personification of nature as female in 'Her message', as females have connotations of mothers and therefore nurturing and love, suggesting that her failed interaction with the social world and subsequent metaphysical barrier has led to a warm and comforting sense of belonging through nature.

Correspondingly Giedroyc explores the manner in which interactions with people and the surrounding world can prove problematic due to physical barriers. Heathcliff is prevented from developing a relationship with the respectable Cathy due to his background and people surrounding him. He is called a 'gypsy brat', 'abomination' and 'thief' and interaction with the people that call him these names prevent him from belonging. The low angle shot of Heathcliff as he walks into the room in a respectable suit, displays him connecting with the wider world in the attempt to forge connections with Cathy and Isabella, in an effort to belong. However this is then juxtaposed to the high angle shot of him being whipped by Hindley. Displaying the complex interplay between attempting to belong and prevention via interaction with others who form barriers.

Therefore both Dickinson and Giedroyc explore the complexities of interaction with people and the wider world, exploring how an experience may both limit and enrich varying aspects of belonging.