

Informative essay on belonging essay

Life



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Belonging as an abstract, transitory concept presents human beings with a sense of association with a particular environment, another individual, or other beings. Some argue that humans have this inherent nature to connect, to feel a sense of attachment and acceptance so that they may feel fulfilled and secure. This sense of belonging can emerge from the rapport formed with people, places, groups, communities, and the wider world. Such affinity may be social, physical, mental, emotional, psychological or spiritual.

However, different notions of belonging are heaped by or recognized in cultural, historical, personal and social contexts. It is a perception, a state of mind which offers a sense of enlightenment, felt when an individual gains an understanding of themselves in relation to others and the wider world. To be a natural member, a part of something, at ease, to have a proper or usual place, to be suitable or fitting, to have a home, a rightful place, those are some of the concepts that constitute belonging.

Such aspects may be considered in terms of experiences and perception of identity, relationships, acceptance and understanding: Peter Crooknecks based his poems *Migrant Hostel*, *10 Mary Street* and *Ancestors* on his own personal experience and resulted in deeply insightful recounts of his migrant past, his family relationship with their home in Australia and his trouble with connecting to his heritage. In these poems, Crooknecks focuses on the theme of not belonging.

In *Migrant Hostel* it's particularly apparent, as he speaks about his family's initial experience as migrants. The entire poem conveys a sense of isolation and dislocation on the part of the immigrants during this time. The mood of

he poem is a dark, negative one, his description of it resembling a prison; Jerkiness's effusive use of imagery allows his responders to effectively depict this particular setting - " No one kept count of all the comings and goings- arrivals of new comers in busloads from the station. In these first few lines we are able to detect that the poet is reminiscing by his use of past tense when he writes " kept". Alliteration of KC in " kept count" provides a harsh sound, illustrating frustration and dislike, as well as highlighting the people's dissociation, unease and tension; we also receive a sense of disorientation and insignificance as the migrants are referred to as numbers.

Because this was a temporary place they had to remain in indefinitely, nobody risked developing connections or setting up a sense of community due to a constant feeling of uncertainty and weariness; " Sudden departures from adjoining blocks that left us wondering who would be coming next" - this segregated environment has the feel of an air force base, which would've brought forth old, unpleasant memories of the unsympathetic military situation suffered in their home countries.

They came from a season of war to a season of peace, having just escaped from a life they could no longer live to a place of supposed freedom and opportunity, yet the migrant hostel made them feel like prisoners, with no sense of safety, thinking they belonged nowhere; the only thing they had was their family or other relations and the few possessions they had with them.

In the second stanza, Crooknecks describes the natural process to look for fraternally through the use of sound and sight to provide a sense of security

and connection - " Nationalities sought each other people we can relate to, hence the simile, " Like a homing pigeon circling to get its bearings", talking about our innate and subconscious searching for any sign of home. This section emanates an erratic feeling, further emphasized by the themes it conveys.

The lines, " Partitioned off at night by memories of hunger and hate", transports a sense of forced routine and separation of the physical and mental type. Night time would've been worse for the migrants because they wouldn't have had anything else to do but being left with their own thoughts and memories of home with no distractions to impede these contemplations from taking over their weary and emotionally frail minds, causing an increase of desperation and eagerness to be released.

The word " hate" carries some resentment, connecting back to horrific memories from the Holocaust. " Always sensing change" illustrates their amplified feeling and emotion due to the tightly enclosed space they had to stay in; the environment they were in was a highly stressful one, which made people extremely sensitive to any type of change. In stanza three, Crooknecks repeats the bird motif, saying how they " lived like birds of passage".

Birds are a symbol of freedom, which is why he continues to use it; he is emphasizing the fact that migrants were not able to make decisions; it was the government, that specific institution that made 'resolutions'. It is the migrants' wish to be let out into the better world they have yet to see. The line, " Unaware of the season", highlights their uncertainty and lack of

stability in this new country; the Australian climate is extremely different from the climate they would've had back home, and therefore they couldn't have much of an idea about how much time had passed.

The days were also long for both the people in the hostel and the ones who went out to work, which meant the day dragged on; all they knew was that they were constantly waiting, so people remained highly alert, awaiting their turn to leave. The line, " Whose track we would follow' shows how unsure they were about where they would be going once they left, whether they'll see any of the people they met again, whether they will be following the same path as the others who left.

This last stanza works as a doleful conclusion; the " barrier at the main gate" is a symbol of bureaucracy and also emphasizes this sense of segregation. The line " Sealed off the highway' is a metaphor for freedom, the Journeys they will be able to undertake once they are accepted and allocated. The " main gate" is personified " as it rose and fell like a finger pointed in reprimand or shame" as someone in power; their lives are controlled, and their treatment as refugees makes them feel belittled, patronized, guilty, like they have come into this new country illegally.

They are " needing its sanction", continuously having to ask for permission and instruction; they have somewhat come to rely on it and have become accustomed it, in a way feeling a connection with this protective gate. The last three lines of the poem, " To pass in and out of lives that had only begun or were dying", denote a new beginning for them and a second chance at finding a home; however the last line contrasts this through more negative

connotations as it expresses a sense of loss of their past identity, culture, heritage and way of life.

Migrant Hostel is a deep personal insight illustrating a temporary sense of belonging, a transitional stage where people seeking change had to wait and be treated like prisoners in order to take their place in Australian society, likely causing lasting mental, emotional and or security, identity and place to belong was satisfied. The house protected them from the strange new environment that surrounded them. We are immediately able to detect that Crooknecks is reminiscing on past events by the first lines: " For nineteen years"; time has a huge impact on the sense of belonging to a place.

Routine was a big part of their life, it was comforting for them this predictability as it helped establish a sense of solidarity and certainty, exemplified in the simile, " We departed each morning, shut the house like a well-oiled lock" and the line " Back at up. M. ; it focuses on the re-found regularity of their existence, and the use of " we" highlights the family sense of belonging to each other after the disrupted and traumatic life they previously led.

The lack of change is emphasized by the " still to narrow bridge". In the second stanza, the rich imagery of the garden helps to further establish the overall positive tone of empowerment and progress. The growth and passion for the garden is contrasted with their work life - " Of washing clothes, and laying sewerage pipes, my parents watered plants"; Crooknecks maintains a tone of respect and admiration for his parents' commitment.

The garden's importance and its role in the family is highlighted in the simile "Like adopted children". To his parents was like a second child as it provided them with a cultural connection to the old ways thus keeping them in touch with their heritage - Jerkiness's parents underwent a process of naturalization, but were too attached to their culture and heritage to assimilate, which impacted on their ability to belong in the new environment.

The garden represents development and connection within the family to show that they are individuals, demonstrating their personality, identity, passion, and creativity as a family. Crooknecks contrasts his parents' care and dedication towards the garden with his own childish attitude; "I'd ravage the backyard" illustrates the approach - he takes and they give. His love for the garden as a kid comes from his ability to indulge in the goods it provides abundantly; "bursting at the seams" communicates his greediness and provides comical, cartoonist imagery.

The mention of the "SST Patriot's College cap" clarifies setting, that he superficially belongs to place, suggesting that he has covered from the experience in the migrant camp. The next stanza begins in present tense, "The house stands", signifying that the poet has gone back to the family home to ensure it is still there; the house is personified in the following line, "Its china-blue coat", and the pride in presentation is clarified.

The other half of the stanza articulates the apprehension regarding the fate of the house as "the whole block has been gazetted for industry", foreshadowing future changes. The fourth stanza starts with the repetition of "For nineteen years", bringing us back into the sat with a sad tone as he

reflects on how they "kept pre-war Europe alive with photographs and letters", valued and treasured because they are a remnants of a history that will not replicate itself.

The family trust and sense of relation to fellow compatriots is illustrated in the "heated discussions and embracing gestures" as they shared their attachment to a peaceful Europe. Crooknecks lists traditional foods and drinks which instigate and encourage social communication between community members and maintain a sense of connection to their Polish heritage.

The last stanza switches back to present time, depicting the garden as a symbol of kinship, "We became citizens of the soil which was feeding us", using a metaphor to emphasize its lines, "Inheritors of a key that'll open no house when this one is pulled down", concludes that they need to remember their culture and history and maintain a connection to each other and the earth, because this key to their home is unique and cannot be replaced by any other house due to the memories that surround it.

Departure is symbolized by the key, moving on from what used to be and into the true; the Crooknecks had to leave their carefully looked after home, this place of protection, and look towards a new life and future possibilities of belonging and adapting. Even though their home might be gone, what they had there as a family will never be destroyed. 10 Mary Street illustrates Pewter's confusion about where he belongs; he has lived two lives, and even though he is able to access both, neither is meaningful to him.

He does not remember Poland, so he cannot associate with his parents on that; he takes for granted his family sense of belonging to the home and the garden and gives it less significance. Peter Jerkiness's sense of identity could be seen as fractured because due to his lack of connection to Polish heritage, the only links he has are memories and stories which are not his, and therefore he cannot help but be more influenced by the newfound Australian culture which he is constantly surrounded by.

People's desire for a home is expressed in our need to belong; it is the constructions of society which tell us what to be and the right thing to believe. However in the end it's the people who make a home, just like the Crooknecks. Feldman said in 1990, "The home place becomes the place of comfort and security, care concern and commitment, and the place in which the personal meanings of home become tied to the individual's concept of self." "Ancestors" is a dark, enigmatic and highly emotive poem which continues the motif of not belonging and cultural isolation.

In this poem he poses numerous rhetorical questions which mirror his confusion in regards to his heritage and culture. This dream is a metaphor for his reflections which focus on self-development and how his family immigration has interfered with significant identity forming communications, given by the first two stanzas, "Who are these shadows that hang over you in a dream-". In this dreamboat his subconscious has created, he speaks in second person, illustrating his detachment or desire to be disconnected and disassociated from this surreal experience.

This is almost a self-reflection, a way for him to desperately try and see things more clearly, to understand his past and those responsible for his existence. In this dream, his ancestors are trying to speak to him, to inform and illuminate him, to complete him so that he may feel the sense of belonging that he should. However he cannot identify, understand or communicate with them and that causes him to feel guilt and frustration, as well as a sense of uncertainty as " they whisper into the darkness". He is denied shared cultural experiences and history, and by the end he is left with a sense of dissatisfaction and impotence.

There is a clear spiritual connection and a sense of belonging with them because they share the same blood, which shows that this poem is also about family belonging; it is an unavoidable relationship that he desperately wants to comprehend because he believes they hold the key to his identity and ability to create a sense of belonging. The line " The wind tastes of blood" reflects those notions but also refers to the natural elements, air, earth, fire and water, and how we are part of blood as we create our own through before he was about to gain some clarity; " Why do you wake as their faces become clearer-".

This poem is both reassuring and disturbing, as it shows that these elders of the past want to help him and give him direction but there is an eerie, haunting presence about them made even worse by the fact that he cannot understand them - " Where do they point to" - he lacks knowledge and that prevents him from forming a peer than blood connection with his Polish ancestors. The line " To what star do their footprints lead? Portrays his confusion and the mysterious ways they are going about communicating

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with him, the word star having positive connotations showing that they are wise and their advice would help, but he cannot decipher their guidance. In the line " From the circle around you", Crooknecks was alluding to the circle as a symbol of perfection and unity. The ancestors standing in a circle symbolize the circle of life, in my end is my beginning, the creation of life.

Water must be a running motif within the three poems - in Migrant Hostel there is the notion that the Crooknecks arrived to Australia by boat, that they had to cross the ocean to find a place of freedom. Water is one of the most powerful natural forces, able to both harm and heal. In Ancestors the line " Sound of a river" with the lines inform tongue dry as caked mud? And later " sand and grasses... Wind" provides with strong imagery, however here it's about the lack of water. There is a clear element of water in 10 Mary Street in the lines in stanza two, " Of washing clothes, and laying ragged pipes, my parents watered plants", so water is what kept the family garden alive and flourishing, and was an essential part in providing Pewter's parents with a profession.

The element of water is mentioned both directly and indirectly, and plays a key role in the experiences the Crooknecks and Peter lived. Different notions of belonging are shaped and created by experiences we have undergone and those perceptions will be transitory. Change is inevitable, and different human beings will hold differing perceptions of what it is to belong to various people, places, groups, communities, and the wider world.