

# Gordon bennet's outsider and emily dickinson poems



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Unique individuals can find belonging through dissatisfaction or a feeling of alienation when conforming to society's expectations, leaving an individual in a state of paradox. This leaves the intrinsic individual to place value on their self, rather than attempting to reform to expectations. This is shown in the painting, ' Outsider' by Gordon Bennett and through Emily Dickinson's poems ' I had been hungry' and ' This is my letter to the world'. Questioning self-identity can allow unique individuals to find a sense of belonging.

Emily Dickinson's Poem ' I had been hungry' suggests the desire not only to find ones identity but also to connect with others. Dickinson " had been hungry all the years" and when the food was suddenly there it wasn't so appealing. The persona had been searching for her identity for all these years and when she finally finds it, she finds she has become someone, not herself. The use of the food being a metaphor for searching for one's identity, simplifies the idea.

The religious imagery in the first stanza in the form of ' wine' is introduced as an alternative metaphor for social interaction, and after yielding to the ' wine', she becomes more and more attracted towards belonging to society. In the second stanza the persona goes on to say, " I could not hope for mine", this is ambiguous as the persona both does not feel it is possible for her to join this society because it is beyond her and paradoxically not what she could ever want, allowing her to return to her ' natural' self-identity.

Furthermore, the image of the persona as an observer looking through the ' window', ' could not hope' for a part of this exclusive Victorian Society. This allows someone such as unique as Emily Dickinson to find belonging through questioning one's self-identity. In the artwork ' Outsider' by Gordon Bennett, <https://assignbuster.com/gordon-bennets-outsider-and-emily-dickinson-poems/>

an Indigenous man finds himself stuck between traditional Indigenous ways of life and the typical, European way of doing things and is forced to question his identity in an attempt to find a sense of belonging.

Similarly to Dickinson's poem "I had been hungry" with the persona oscillating between different ideals in life. The 'Outsider' has connotations of Van Gogh's 'Starry Night' and Van Gogh's 'Bedroom'. Van Gogh's original bedroom evokes a feeling of peace and harmony, in Bennett's painting the bedroom becomes the site of violent conflict that involves complex and intersecting personal and cultural histories. The headless figure of the Aboriginal man has an animated, ghost-like presence that haunts the scene.

A gush of blood red paint shoots into the sky from his body. Bloody handprints are stamped across the walls. This imagery alludes to the violent suppression of Indigenous people and culture in the nation's history that was thrown into focus by the Bicentenary celebrations and creates uncertainty for the persona as to which ideology to follow. He is left to conform to European societies expectations as they take over his natural ideas and in doing so question his self-identity. An individual may find belonging through alienation.

This is shown through meta-poetry in Emily Dickinson's poem 'This is my letter to the world'. In this poem the persona finds themselves alienated from the rest of the world. After sending a letter 'to the world, that never wrote to me'. The absolute negative 'never' establishes distance from 'the world' as the world fails to reciprocate her letter. The use of the words 'I cannot see' creates an allusion to isolation and reinforces the point of unique individuals attempting to belong through alienation.

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Also shown in Dickinson's poem 'I had been hungry all the years' as the persona finds themselves alienated from the rest of the society. After unsuccessfully attempting to find belonging in society, she goes on to say 'Nor was I hungry, so I found'. This is the moment where the poet explains how she overcame her angst and returned to her alienation. She credits herself with a victory over existentialist anguish and being able to persevere through the temptations of society. This leaves the intrinsic individual to place value on their self, rather than attempting to conform to expectations.

In Bennett's painting the aboriginal man is alienated from society. The man being stuck in a room by himself shows the isolation that is faced by the persona in today's world, similar to Dickinson poem "This is my letter to the world", where the persona finds themselves alienated from the rest of the world. In 'Outsider' the hands on the walls symbolise white man's footprint on the aboriginal society with them being the colour of blood, showing the trauma that indigenous people have gone through with the countless battles.

The fact that the room is only half complete with the roof open represents the white society taking over the aboriginals land and symbolising that there is very little aboriginal heritage left. The circular forms in the sky are inspired by the brilliant bursts of light in van Gogh's Starry night and represent what is left of aboriginal society. They absorb the flow of 'blood' and recall the symbols often used in Aboriginal 'dot painting' of the Western Desert to represent significant sites.

It is through the isolation that the unique individual has suffered in an attempt to find a sense of belonging when conforming to society's expectations. Through alienation and questioning one's self-identity, unique

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individuals can find a sense of belonging or leave the unique individual to place value on their self, rather than attempting to reform to expectations. This is shown in the poems by Emily Dickinson and the artwork, ' Outsider' by Gordon Bennett.