

**AMERICAN PARADOX REPRESENTATION IN  
EMILY DICKINSON'S SELECTED POEMS  
(Gambaran Sikap Paradoks Masyarakat Amerika  
Dalam KaryaPuisi Pilihan Emily Dickinson)**

By:

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**ABSTRAK**

Emily Dickinson adalah seorang penyair Amerika abad ke 19. Dia dikenal sebagai seorang penulis yang sangat religius, akan tetapi pada akhirnya dia berubah menjadi seorang penulis yang absurd dan paradoks. Perubahan yang sangat fundamental dan radikal ini dilator belakanginya oleh hubungan pribadinya (percintaannya) dengan dua orang kekasihnya yang putus karena kematian akibat Perang Saudara. Dickinson pada akhirnya mengalami kegagalan untuk membentuk rumah tangga yang sangat diimpikannya. Sejak saat itulah hati kecilnya bergejolak dan mulai memberontak terhadap Tuhan, dan mempengaruhi karya-karyanya yang bertemakan sikap paradoks. Karena penelitian ini di dalam lingkup disiplin Pengkajian Amerika, maka selain menggunakan pendekatan psikologi, juga menekankan pada pendekatan interdisiplin, di antaranya pendekatan sejarah, budaya, sosiologi, biography, dan pendekatan sastra. Hasil Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa era dan kondisi social sangat berperan untuk mempengaruhi pergeseran nilai sosial dalam kehidupan pribadi seseorang secara khusus dan masyarakat secara umum.

Kata kunci: *isuparadoks – perubahan nilai sosial – hipokrit – kasih sayang.*

**The Background of the Study**

Emily Dickinson was considered among the greatest poets in American Literature. Dickinson was a prolific writer, she wrote nearly 1800 poems and numerous letters during her lifetime but only a handful of them was published until her death. In spite of a great number of poems she wrote, Dickinson still eludes us by her paradoxical attitude. Somehow we do not really get to know who she was, how she lived or what her motives were for writing as she did. There is a paradox in knowing so much about her and yet so little but the paradox we find in her poems is of a quite different nature.

As a writer, he would like to find out the poet's reasons that might influence her to be fond of writing paradox issues in some of her poems. The writer will,

therefore, relate this study with Sociology and the History of American society especially the historical background of Emily Dickinson's life condition and certainly to the surrounding or nature that may strengthen her opinion to write such paradox ideas. Since literary work is the art of writing, we can express our feeling in art. Art as the portrait of human life,

there are happiness, sadness, and every feeling that humans may experience. So literary work can be a medium for the human to write about their feeling and ideas.

Based on the statement as well as inspiration above, finally, the writer determined to choose Emily Dickinson's poems because, through the poems, the writer may inspire many people, men or women. From her works, she showed even

ordinary women can create something to express our feeling. Even though some of her poems seem to be so paradox but that is the real truth as well as about the American paradox representation that comes from her heart.

### The Problems of the Study

Having read and analyzed some poems written by Emily Dickinson, there are some problems conveyed to be discussed. In order not to have various issues, the writer determined to study the followings:

1. What is the American paradox representation in Emily Dickinson's poems?
2. What are Emily Dickinson's motives in writing the paradox in her selected poems?
3. How does the American paradox representation influence Emily Dickinson's poems?

### The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems of the study above, the writer formulated the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To find out the American paradox representation in Emily Dickinson's poems
2. To find out Emily Dickinson's motives in writing the paradox representation in her selected poems
3. To find out how the paradox representation influence Emily Dickinson's poems

### 1.4 The Scopes of the Study

Emily Dickinson has written more than 1800 poems. In order to make the analysis clearly, the scope of the study is only focused on "the paradox representation" in her selected poems, they are :

- a. I know that He exists (365)
- b. The Brain – is wider than the Sky (632)
- c. Hope is the thing with feathers (254)

- d. Pain - expands the Time (967)
- e. One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted (407)
- f. Much Madness is most divine Sense (435)

### What is the term Paradox

In order to avoid misunderstanding or ambiguous meanings of the terms used in this research, the writer tries to clarify the terms *paradox*. Nicholas Rescher in *Paradoxes Their Roots, Range and Resolution* (2001: 7) says:

"A paradox is first of all phenomena within logic. Generally, a paradox arises when premises that are all plausible but mutually inconsistent entail a conclusion which also plausible. We have a plurality of theses, each individually plausible in the circumstances, but collectively inconsistent. Every member of the contentions group stake a claim that we would be minded to accept if such acceptance were unproblematic. But when all these claims are conjoined, a logical contradictions census"

Paradoxes are often posed as a kind of riddle, assuming that of two contradictory statements only one can be true. According to James R. Shaw there are two types of paradoxical, they are:

1. Paradoxical Propositions: there are propositions, to which we can relate cognitively (through attitudes of belief, desire, hope, etc), whose truth at some world we cannot straightforwardly establish due to paradox.
2. Paradoxical Mentality: there are mental states (states of belief, desire, hope, etc) considered holistically, whose relations (doxastic relation, bouletic relation, etc) to some possible world or set of worlds we cannot straightforwardly establish due to the paradox (<https://www.jshaw.net/document/>).

Actually, there is a very close conceptual connection between paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality. The difference between paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality is paradoxical propositions which are related with the reason and issue why someone chooses paradoxical attitude, hope, desire, etc in his life and paradoxical mentality is someone that has paradoxical in her attitude, hope, idea, desire, etc in his life. So someone with paradoxical mentality positively has paradoxical propositions but someone with paradoxical propositions does not always have the paradoxical mentality.

The writers would expect to find primarily rhetorical paradoxes in poetry and in fact when paradoxes in Dickinson's poems are discussed, they are generally treated as rhetorical devices. Charlotte Alexander in his book *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (1965: 13) said as follows:

"The foregoing comments suggest that Emily Dickinson's poetry (along with her letters) is her personality, but further, that the personality is a paradox, an apparent contradiction reflected in poetry. In the others, she manages often to represent opposite extremes"

Since most of her poems convey possibilities, possible views in nature, death, eternity and God, 'truths' about what lies beyond truth and confers meaning to what seems meaningless, she also called a "paradox poet". Her point of view exceeds that of the woman living in her father's house. It is quite interesting how Emily Dickinson has a great work to perform although she chose private life.

### **Paradoxical Attitude**

Attitude is related to psychology, attitude is an individual tendency to respond in a special way to something that exists in the social environment such as institution, personal, situation, idea, and concept and so on. Hendra Widjaja in his

book *Berani Tampil Beda Dan Percaya Diri* (2016: 116) say as follows:

"Sikap merupakan suatu keadaan internal atau keadaan yang masih ada dalam diri manusia, keadaan internal tersebut berupa keyakinan yang diperoleh dari proses akomodasi dan asimilasi pengetahuan yang Mereka dapatkan"

"Attitude is an internal condition or the condition that still exists in man, the internal condition that translates from the process of accommodation and assimilation of knowledge they get" (my own translation)

From the statement above the writer concludes that attitude is a tendency to approach or avoid, positive or negative issues to various social circumstances.

Furthermore, Martin N. Seif says:

"The paradoxical attitude necessary to overcome anxiety. When working on overcoming your Anxiety Disorder, you will see that the normal, common-sense ways of coping with 'feelings' don't work. In general, we believe that we do best by following our feelings, using our emotions to guide our actions in life. In contrast, we need to learn NOT to follow what our anxiety is telling us. I would like you to think of anxiety as a "pseudo-emotion;" often it is best to try to do the opposite of what your anxious feelings are telling you to do" (<http://drmartinseif.com/dms/paradoxical-attitude/>).

### **Paradoxical Idea**

Paradoxical ideas on Emily Dickinson's poems are as follow, her bravery to judge God, talk about life, death, immortality, religion, society and eternity. She also has a different style of poetry such as unconventional capitalization and punctuation, lack of title, and short lines that often used slant rhyme. Even some of her poems seem so paradox but they come from her deepest heart. Actually, it is hard to understand and it is the uniqueness of Emily Dickinson.

## Paradoxical Issue

Actually, there is a different reason for someone to choose the paradoxical attitude and Emily Dickinson chose to live a secluded life even though no one knows the reason for her choice until her death. The biggest issues why Emily Dickinson has the paradoxical attitude is because she has a mental illness but Charlotte Alexander in his book *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (1965: 13) said about her as follows:

"She was certainly deprived of such close human relationships as marrying, having her own children, and being in intimate contact with many people. Perhaps this isolation came through a combination of circumstances beginning with her own personality, and was molded in the household of a shrinking mother and a dominating father"

The statement says that Emily Dickinson also has a paradoxical attitude caused by her parent's attitudes and the society during her lifetime even though until her death no one knows the real reason.

## The Analysis of the Poems

The analysis is focussed on the interpretation of the writer about how Emily Dickinson portrays her paradoxical attitude in her poems. Interpretation of the poems is a difficult and important problem because even a single poem has a lot of meaning for different people. It is a common fact if there are many interpretations of a poem.

Actually, Emily Dickinson has written many poems but the writer of this research only focussed on the six poems mentioned previously.

### 1. I know that He exists(365)

*I know that He exists.  
Somewhere-in silence-  
He has hid his rare life  
From our gross eyes.  
'Tis an instant's play-  
'Tis a fond Ambush-*

*Just to make Bliss  
Earn her own surprise!*

*But-should the play  
Prove piercing earnest-  
Should the glee-glaze  
In Death's-stiff-stare-*

*Would not the fun  
Look too expensive!  
Would not the jest-  
Have crawled too far!*

This poem talks about Emily Dickinson's perspective about God, she displays the full extent of her complicated feeling. During adolescence, especially when she is studying at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, Emily Dickinson has engaged in a long struggle with faith. Still many of her poems show that she was preoccupied with religious matters and always take theology seriously. She is keenly aware of the difficulties and ambiguities of belief and tried to think out the consequences of the disappearance of God. The first line of this poem is a positive statement, ending with a period as if no doubt is admitted. But at once it is made clear that the certainty of the first line must be qualified. God exists but is he is hidden somewhere, where we can not find Him. Dickinson tackles this issue. She shows her paradoxical attitude by putting the question of God's existence front and center: "*I know that He exists.*" But she also believes that his "*rare*" existence is hidden from our grosser and fleshly nature. This is a purposeful act: "*He has hidden his rare life.*" But to have a direct experience of God, people will do what they can. Some through suffering or self-denial, others through meditation and many more through prayer and supplication. Emily Dickinson frames this as a game, searching for God becomes a party to this game. His hiding now seems playful rather than precautionary. He may well indulge in "*an instant's play,*" hide and seek but it is a dangerous game.

Dickinson asks, what would happen if the seeker finds God?

*Tis an instan's play-  
'Tis a fond Ambush-  
Just to make Bliss  
Earn her own surprise!*

When the seeker want to make a bliss, but the game can well become "*piercing earnest*" that is the surprise.

*But-should the play  
Prove piercing earnest-*

Dickinson employs the word "*piercing*" for it is suggestions of stabbing, for the nails that pierced Jesus hands and feet during the crucifixion, for a bolt through the heart. This is no longer a game. The "*glee*" can quickly glaze over into the stare of the death but Dickinson does not blame God's seeker for unwise presumption. She drips with sarcasm in the last stanza about God's hide and seeks, does not that "*fun Look too expensive.*" People really cannot survive direct contact with the Almighty.

The search for God and the truth are basically the same pursuit. The disappearing of absolute truth has opened for Dickinson endless possibilities, it enables her to write her kind of poem and give meaning to the world and to her own life. On the other hand, it evokes her fears, the existential doubt that has become inescapable after the disappearance of God. "*I know that He exists*" ends thus :

*But-should the play  
Prove piercing earnest-  
Should the glee-glaze  
In Death's-stiff-stare-*

*Would not the fun  
Look too expensive!  
Would not the jest-  
Have crawled too far!*

When God leaves, death comes in. God and death have become rivals, for

Dickinson, it is one or the other. Believing in immortality is equivalent to believing in God. Harboring doubts entails giving room for death and consequently the obligation to find the meaning of it now there is no longer God offers the prospect of life after death. The loss of belief in the revelation of truth and eternally valid definitions compels her to find truth and meaning for herself. This is the great quest Dickinson undertakes in her poems, and it will turn out to be a long life and a lonely search for God and religious themes remain of the utmost importance to her. God has disappeared, but still is there, somewhere, hidden, a possibility and the old religious questions are still posed. It is the poet's task to engage herself in the great themes of life and death, immortality and eternity. Yet together with these questions, there is always the problem how she, Emily Dickinson, as a poet and as a human being, can speak about subjects like immortality and eternity, subjects that lie beyond human experience and beyond the limits of what can be known. Dickinson has found a solution for this predicament but, as we shall see, it is a highly paradoxical one. That is why she chooses poetry as her medium to portray her paradoxical attitude.

In this poem, the writer uses James R. Shaw's theory which says that there are two types of paradoxical they are paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality. Paradoxical propositions in this poem are when she has the idea that God exists but says that seeking God is like playing the game. The paradoxical mentality here is when Dickinson knew that God exists, she was not like the other people who try so hard for seeking God. Eventually, she refuses conversion and stopped joining the church. Her paradoxical attitude makes her stopped attending church even though she had a good Calvinist father. Of course, that is a close conceptual connection between paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality. Someone with paradoxical propositions usually has a paradoxical

mentality too, even it is not always. Emily Dickinson's biography also helps the writers analyze this poem. Her biography tells the reason why she has a paradoxical attitude, why she uses paradox words in her poems.

## 2. The Brain – is wider than the Sky(632)

*The Brain- is wider than the sky-  
For- put them side by side-  
The one the other will contain  
With ease- and You- beside-*

*The Brain is deeper than the sea-  
For- hold them- Blue to Blue-  
The one the other will absorb-  
As Sponges- Buckets-do-*

*The Brain is just the weight of God-  
For- Heft them- Pound for Pound-  
And they will differ- if they do-  
As Syllable from sound-*

It is a poem by the mysterious Emily Dickinson, Congressman's daughter, and recluse. For Dickinson, writing poems is the expression of thought. Emily is one of her family who most valued thought. She has to think she is the only one of us whom to do, her sister Lavina said about her. The possibility of conferring meaning to a meaningless word is the purpose of Dickinson's search, trying to find the outlines, the limits of meaning and truth. To do so, she employs strategies. That is why she called a paradox-poet. "*The Brain- is wider than the sky*" is an interesting poem of Emily Dickinson because she compares a physically small object "*The Brain*" to vast, huge spaces such as "*the sky*" and "*the sea*" as well as a theoretically large figure "*God*", this poem is so paradox. In the first stanza, she compares the brain and the sky.

*The Brain- is wider than the sky-  
For- put them side by side-  
The one the other will contain*

Dickinson claims that the brain is wider than the sky, obviously the sky

contains with the brain because the sky is a larger space in which the brain exists. As the manuscript shows, Dickinson plays the word "include" for "contain" putting them both side by side and marked with plus signs, leaving us with textual variants. However, figuratively speaking the brain is wider than the sky because it has the ability to learn and access all the information under the sun. Although our brains do not expand very much physically speaking throughout our lifetimes, they are constantly growing in the sense that we learn more and more each day. The brain includes the sky as a mental image or an object of thought, and in the second stanza, she compares the brain with the sea.

*The Brain is deeper than the sea-  
For- hold them- Blue to Blue-  
The one the other will absorb-  
As Sponges- Buckets-do-*

The container or inclusion metaphor governs the second comparison, too. The bucket contains with the sponge, but the sponge absorbs and contains with the water and nature includes the sea by absorbing its image. Although Dickinson uses "brain" to stand for "mind" she does not equate them in a reductionist way, rather she uses something tangible. The brain in the physical organ indicates something intangible, the power of thought to envision the enormity of nature. Metonymy is the name for this figure of speech, for instance, "heart" instead of "feeling," or "the brain" instead of "thought" or "imagination." But in the third stanza of this poem, Dickinson shows a kind of juxtaposition or similarity.

*The Brain is just the weight of God-  
For- Heft them- Pound for Pound-  
And they will differ- if they do-  
As Syllable from sound-*

The brain is compared with God, and weighing is the metaphor not containing. It is different from the first and the second stanza. The brain is only or exactly "*just the weight of God.*" Dickinson is raised in

a Calvinist household and knows the Bible well. In the Bible “eternal weight of glory”(2 Corinthians 4:17) for Christians, the word “glory” describes the manifestation or presence of God and human beings are believed to share in this glory by having been made in the image of God. So, by writing “*The Brain is just the weight of God*”, Dickinson may have meant that the brain is the glory of God, a manifestation of His presence in nature, or that the brain or mind is fashioned in God’s image.

The element of a paradox here, she gives the line of thought in the third stanza, she equally may have meant that God is an image made by the human brain or mind. Dickinson struggles with faith and doubt and it shows when she was at the age thirty-eight, she had stopped attending church. James R. Shaw’s theory which says that there are two types of paradoxical they are paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality. Paradoxical propositions in this poem are when people use feeling and emotion in writing a poem but for Dickinson, writing poetry is the expression of thought, this poem is more about the mind and thought. She tries to think through exhaustively the subjects that are most important to her. When she writes about grief or despair, she writes about her thought’s response to them. That is the poetic strategies of Emily Dickinson and the paradoxical mentality in this poem is her way or idea of comparing “*Brain*” with “*sky*” and “*sea*” with “*God*”. The writer also uses Sigmund Freud’s theory to analyze this poem in which relates the psychological view between the artist and her work.

### 3. “Hope” is the thing with feathers(254)

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers-  
That perches is the soul-  
And sings the tune without the words-  
And sweetest- in the Gale- is heard-  
And sore must be the storm-  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm-  
I’ve heard it in the chilliest land-  
And on the strangest Sea-*

*Yet- never- in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb- of me.*

This poem is believed to have been written in 1861 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily\\_Dickinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Dickinson)). This poem is interesting because it talks about hope and as with many of her works, Dickinson takes the paradoxical idea and feeling in this poem. She images “*Hope*” as a “*thing with feathers*” something physical, visible and tangible, in other words, a singing bird. Dickinson has written many poems trying to define such things as hope, despair, suffering, agony, loneliness, etc but she does not always use the same technique to arrive at a definition of emotion, experience or concept, in this case, hope. When the other people usually link hope with the mentality and invisible but hope, for Dickinson, just like a singing bird that sings the wordless tune and never stops singing it, nothing can faze it. It is showed by these lines:

*And sings the tune without the words-  
And sweetest- in the Gale- is heard-  
And sore must be the storm-  
That could abash the little Bird*

For Dickinson, hope does not communicate by speaking to us in a conventional sense. It is a feeling that we get, not always a rational one, that cheers up us even in the dark times of despair. Even when there are no words to sing, the bird continues to create a song. Indeed, hope is the sweetest of all when “*the Gale*” is busy raging during turbulent or trouble time, hope is there for us. “*And sore must be the storm*” even something is painful and aching but hope always there. Hope stays present, always singing and always flying. Hope can stand in every situation even in times of cold comfort or in foreign and unfamiliar climes, hope remains.

*I’ve heard it in the chilliest land-  
And on the strangest Sea-*

In the last lines of this poem, Emily Dickinson says that hope never asks for

anything from us in return. It provides comfort and solace but does not require anything.

*Yet- never- in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb- of me.*

“*Hope*” is the thing with feathers is one of the most famous poems by Dickinson, actually this poem has been played in several orchestral shows in the world. Dickinson is creating a metaphor of “*Hope*” an abstract thing through a visible and real thing that is singing bird. The hope like a bird that continues to fly inside, even in the dark time hope can offer some encouragement. Every human need hope in life, no one gets to live a pleasant life without it because hope is what makes you stand up when you are feeling down. It is what you need in order to continue living. Many people have been struggling to obtain hope, but deep down in the soul, hope perches and waits for calling.

To analyze this poem, the writer also implements the analysis of paradoxical propositions and paradoxical mentality. The paradoxical mentality here is her idea which she compares “*Hope*” with “*bird*” actually both of those things have no relation for usual people. Meanwhile, Emily Dickinson with her paradox style writes this poem that people never imagine before. It is hard to understand at first, but when we analyze this poem which relates to her paradox side and her poetic strategies we will understand it later. The paradoxical proposition in this poem is her reason why she writes this poem. Since this poem was written in 1861, a history of America in the 1860s is the strongest reason and issue why she wrote this poem. David M. Potter in his book *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (1977) said that the decade of the 1860s was a period of upheaval, America was experiencing the social, political, and military crisis of the Civil War. With this poem, Dickinson offered a hopeful view of humanity even as America was sliding into the darkness and despair of the Civil War. It was a paradox

here because of Emily Dickinson's life in her era, women were dominated by men. Even realizing that she herself was less successful in the struggle against male bias, as editors to whom she submitted her poems rewrote them, returned them, or suggested that she stopped writing altogether but she never stopped writing. The vast majority of her poems remained to arrange in packets and locked in a bureau until her death. She gave support for America in a quiet way by this poem.

#### 4. Pain - expands the Time (967)

*Pain- expands the Time  
Ages coil within  
The minute Circumference  
Of a single Brain-  
Pain contracts- the Time-  
Occupied with Shot  
Gamuts of Eternities  
Are as they were not-*

Emily Dickinson shows as her task in life to think about the world, life and all important matters of human beings have to deal with. She chooses poetry as the medium to express her thoughts. When she writes about emotions or the dilemmas of human existence, she writes what she thinks about them, and her thoughts always reflect the complexities of her feelings. This leads to a certain abstraction in her work, a lack of setting or senselessness. In this poem Dickinson writes about pain, she does not, as a rule, write a poem about a concrete situation, the pain she felt or what caused it but people do learn what pain is and what pain can do.

*Pain- expands the Time  
Ages coil within  
The minute Circumference  
of a single Brain-*

In the first stanza, Dickinson clearly struggles with the concept of the time in her daily life as well as in her writing. She seems unable to fully accept time's dominion over her, and in order to escape its power, she wrote fantastic poems about



eternity, the afterlife, the sun pausing the sky, and other ways to escape from time. Often time seemed relative to the amount of pain she was experiencing. Dickinson says that pain can extend the time but ages are compressed tightly. The expansion of pain is that it forces to relieve every stupidity, awful moment and consider them universally significant.

*Pain contracts- the Time-  
Occupied with Shot  
Gamuts of Eternities  
Are as they were not-*

In the second stanza, she reverses course and states the opposite, the truth that she fears most. Most people will hate the idea of time slowing down or being expanded while they were in pain, but Emily Dickinson is different and paradox. Dickinson's greatest fear is that the time may be sped up or contracted. The constant lack of control over time's steady march is terrifying for this woman who both desires and fears the dependability of eternity.

The first stanza presents a pain not as relevant as the second. The first sounds unnecessary and the second, with "*pain contracts*" create a situation where one may be grateful for pain. Pain takes a variety of forms in a human being's life. Eventually, the pain is better than death. There are two types of pain constitutive of human experiences, even if one may be transcendent. Somehow, these two sorts of pain are one. During her school years, Emily Dickinson has two men in her life but both of them died young in the Civil War. She has deeply felt the pain in her life, and she also judges God as a "*Burglar, banker, father*", she wrote that in her poem "*I never lost as much but twice*" exactly in the second stanza:

*Angles- twice descending  
Reimbursed my store-  
Burglar! Banker- Father!  
I am poor once more!*

The pain she is experiencing when she loses her love for twice is the greatest

reason for her to write this poem. The paradox here is when most people write about the pain they usually write a poem about a concrete situation, the pain she feels or what causes it, that is a rule to write a poem. But when Dickinson writes a poem about pain, she writes what pain is and what pain can do. Although we have to guess when or why Dickinson herself may have been so hurt, her poems leave no doubt that she has deeply felt the pain she writes about. It is the paradoxical proposition in this poem. The paradoxical mentality in this poem is her different idea which her greatest fear was that the time might be sped up or contracted in this poem. She is not like the other people when most of the people afraid of slowing down or being expanded while they were in pain. She desires and fear of the dependability of eternity, the constant lack of control over time's steady march is terrifying for her.

##### **5. One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted (407)**

*One need not be a Chamber- to be  
Haunted  
One need not be a House-  
The Brain has Corridors – surpassing  
Material Place-*

*Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting  
External Ghost  
Than its interior Confronting-  
That Cooler Host.*

*Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,  
The Stone's chase-  
Than Unarmed, one's a self encounter-  
In lonesome Place-*

*Ourselves behind ourselves, concealed-  
Should startle most-  
Assassin hid in our Apartment  
Be Horror's least.*

*The Body- borrows a Revolver-  
He bolts the Door-  
O'erlooking a superior spectre-  
Or More-*

This poem, that reminds of a gothic tale, warns us that building the house and shutting the door may give a false sense of

security. One can never be sure who or what lives inside such as a demon, persecutors one cannot escape from. There are indications that Dickinson suffered from depression. Dickinson herself is haunted by painful memories, gloomy thoughts, and feelings of despair. A house can become a dismal prison. Dickinson has a double view of seclusion and even imprisonment. She has built a house for the soul in poetry. The house allows her freedom to think and write. The freedom of the mind is the greatest value and may compensate for any restrictions to move or act as one chooses. For Dickinson herself, withdrawal from society is a necessary prerequisite for the self-encounter of a human being. As the world without diminishes, the inner world grows. But it also means being shut up with the danger of her own mind. On the other hand, imprisonment is no impediment for thought and can even be annulled by it.

*One need not be a Chamber- to be  
Haunted  
One need not be a House-  
The Brain has Corridors – surpassing  
Material Place-*

In the first stanza, the “*Chamber*” and “*House*” are the important images in this poem. For Dickinson, poems are the medium to convey her thoughts, but they are also the house her poetic “I”. Just like Emily Dickinson herself lives in a secluded life in her father’s house, the poet lives in a house of ideas. It is the place of the soul from where it can contemplate the world. However, her feelings toward her home are ambivalent. It is the home where she is safe and which allows her room and freedom to think but it is also a place of routine and confinement. She has no need to leave this house because here everything is within reach, with the spreading wide of her hands she can gather Paradise but in this dwelling place of her mind dangers are lurking. The mind can also be its own enemy. In this first stanza, Dickinson also deals with paradox ideas, fears caused by

the external phenomenon and those caused by our own brain.

*The Brain has Corridors – surpassing  
Material Place-*

In these lines, she says that what inside our brain is much more frightening than any tangible thing or place. This idea is further developed in the second stanza as follows :

*Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting  
External Ghost  
Than its interior Confronting-  
That Cooler Host.*

There is “*External Ghost*” in this second stanza which deals with fears caused by the external phenomenon. “*Interior Confronting*” deals with the fears caused by our own brain. She argues that one’s mind is far more frightening than meeting a ghost at midnight.

*Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,  
The Stone’s chase-  
Than Unarmed, one’s a self encounter-  
In lonesome Place-*

In this stanza, she says that encountering yourself in a “*lonesome Place*” is far more terrifying than galloping through a dangerous abbey. Dickinson may comment on her personal psychological struggles or simply observing the agonizing nature of individuals suffering from mental disorders. Pervasive loneliness and helplessness are also significant aspects of personal fears. Cognitive struggles can be a source of extreme anxiety and anguish. This poem reveals the terrifying nature of mental illness and argues that individuals should fear their minds more than external threats.

*Ourself behind ourself, concealed-  
Should startle most-  
Assassin hid in our Apartment  
Be Horror’s least.*

In this stanza, Dickinson declares that people can arm ourselves against the "Assassin hid in our Apartment" but cannot defend ourselves against the intruders of our minds. Dickinson is vague as to what we have within that is so frightening but it could be any number, not things such as regret, guilt, imagination, anxiety, paranoia, fears of loss or death. All these things make us fearful to continue on with life or reluctant to get out of bed.

*The Body- borrows a Revolver-  
He bolts the Door-  
O'erlooking a superior spectre-  
Or More-*

We can seek to protect ourselves from some perceived threat lurking out there in the real world. Dickinson neatly invokes such an idea through the thriller, inspired an image of arming oneself with a revolver and bolting the door but to do so is to overlook a far more powerful and dangerous "spectre" or something that is "More" than a spectre. This poem is a fine example of Emily Dickinson's interest in the mind and the demons that lurk within.

Since the writer connecting the psychological view of Emily Dickinson and her poem in this analysis, Freud's theory was used by the writer in order to analyze this poem. Paradoxical propositions here are the background of Emily Dickinson to write this striking poem, she is well-known about her choices to live as a deprived life in her father's home, but still has the paradox side about her choices. For her, one side home where she is safe and which allows her room and freedom to think but it is also a place of routine and confinement. The paradoxical mentality is about her idea to argue that people should fear their minds more than any tangible things by this poem. She says that regrets, guilt, imagination is more dangerous and deathly than meeting a ghost at midnight, galloping through a dangerous abbey or being stalked by an assassin in one's home. Dickinson also compares one's mind to a house with

haunted corridors. She believes that individuals are helpless against the inner workings of the mind.

## 6. Much Madness is divinest Sense(435)

*Much madness is divinest Sense-  
To a discerning Eye-  
Much Sense- the starkest Madness-  
'Tis the Majority  
In this, as All, prevail-  
Assent- and you are sane-  
Demur- you're straightway dangerous-  
And handled with a Chain-*

Dickinson's thought is at once the reason for her isolated position and the consequence of it. She is the woman in white who withdraws from the world explore mentally all possibilities that present themselves, but who also knows the dangers of her enterprise. For Dickinson, the truth about important issues is not only affirmed by religion, science or logic, it is also a matter of social convention and acknowledges by the majority. She acknowledges her status as both finite and infinite. Dickinson primarily describes her own situation but at the same time, the poems express her inherently paradoxical views about the human condition.

In her poetry, Dickinson has built her house, the prison that allows her mind unlimited freedom. Within a world of facts, she has created a universe of possibilities, a landscape without features that she fills with attempts at definition, riddles without solution and experiments in thought, drawing the outer lines of the unlimited. In doing so she prefers the possibility to fact and paradox to the truth. It may be dangerous to harbor views that unorthodox and conflicting with those of the majority, and moreover mutually exclusive. Even if they are "most divine sense" to her discerning eye, the paradoxes Dickinson cherish would not have been appreciated by everyone, so she withholds her letter to the world. The world is allowed to read it only after her death.

*Much madness is divinest Sense-*

The first line of this poem, Dickinson begins with a paradoxical line which she equates madness to divine sense. She employs her ironic, or contradictory wit to the full text of this poem, beginning with the paradox in the first line. With the first two words in this line, it might concern what she means by “*madness*,” and questions that may arise. Is she referring to insanity or anger? To complicate matters, Dickinson throws the reader off by adding the surprising two words at the end of this line, juxtaposing the first impressions with a contradictory second one. Is Dickinson serious or is she poking fun at someone or something? Is she enjoying her madness? Is she using madness to rise above the situation in which she feels uncomfortable or trapped? How can madness make sense? And why “*most divine Sense?*” Does she mean divine in the sense of being godly, or is she referring to something that is merely delightful? There are so many questions arise by her paradoxical first line in this poem. “*Madness*” is the opposites of sanity. Sanity is an ambiguous term, it takes on its definitions from its surroundings. What is considered sane in society might be defined as crazy in another? Although the words sanity and “*madness*” have definite meanings recognized by modern readers in Dickinson’s time, these concepts are often used when discussing women’s right or the attempts to suppress them.

*Much Sense- the starkest Madness-  
'Tis the Majority  
In this, as All, prevail-*

In this line, Dickinson represents her rebellion as well as her sense of frustration as an intelligent female living in a world dominated by dictatorial males. In male-dominated societies like the one in which Dickinson lives, the majority rule is in the hands of men, whether they are in

the majority or not. For instance, her father, Edward Dickinson is a lawyer and Treasurer of Amherst College. Although Emily Dickinson goes on to attend both Amherst Academy and Hadley Female Seminary (present-day Mount Holyoke College), she does not receive a degree when her brother becomes a lawyer. Her father also heavily censors the books she read in fear that some books might lead her away from his religious beliefs, which he demanded that his daughter accepts without argument. Her father must have been torn between recognizing her intellectual curiosity and want to control her thoughts. Her father prefers her reading a lot of Bible to reading the other books. In this poem, she says that “*the Majority*” that “*prevail*” is the majority that tyrannizes others with its conventions to which they are forced to adhere or else be “*handled with a Chain.*”

*Assent- and you are sane-  
Demur- you're straightway dangerous-  
And handled with a Chain-*

The “*Assent*” implies abiding by or, in more oppressive terms, acquiescing. In Dickinson’s life, she is under the domination of her father and her town pressures of Christian conversion that Dickinson experienced in Amherst during her time. “*Assent*” takes on stronger emotions, she is torn between her natural shyness, her sensitivity, and her innate sense of rebellion. In this last three lines, she confronted the weight of contradictions and emotional battles. This conflict is a universal one. A perception person can tell that sometimes madness is actually sensible and it is actually mad. The majority calls the shots on this, as on everything else. Agreeing with the majority they will call you sane. Disagreeing with them they will call you crazy. The word “*Demur*” is fascinating, it means to object or protest. In the seventh line, she uses the word in contrast with “*Assent.*” After using “*Demur*” she inserts a dash, which is sharp and pointed,

almost weaponlike. If a person opposes the majority, he or she is held at bay, because to protest is to be dangerous. The adjective that she uses in this line “*straightway*” reflects back to the straight form of the dash that precedes it. It implies immediacy, no trial by peers, no justification. Whoever balks at the majority rule will be considered worse than a traitor. They will be denied any rights and quickly taken away.

Line eight suggests that not only will the objector be declared insane and taken away, but he or she will also either be confined with “*Chain*” or beaten with them. The word “*handed*” is again a bit ambiguous but the sentiment is very clear, either all freedoms will cease to exist, or the perpetrator will feel pain. It is so unpleasant that the poem suggests that one should take very seriously the attitude of madness because the consequences can be severe.

The paradoxical propositions in this poem are how Emily Dickinson talks about those who think independently and perceive beyond the present or the appearance of things and assess what real dangers lie ahead for people. To the obtuse majority, these few perceptive individuals are mad and considered dangerous to the complacency and conventional wisdom of the majority. The paradoxical mentality is her idea that madness could ever be sensible or vice versa. What one needs to understand the paradox is the reference in line two to “*a discerning Eye.*” She believes that the majority is not discerning, else agreeing with them and being called sensible by them would not qualify a person. For her as being mad, further since the majority is not discerning, disagreeing with them makes a person sensible.

This poem can also reflect her anger because of the unfair society in her era, for although she was described as quiet spoken and demure. Dickinson does not hold back her strongest sentiments when it comes to writing them. The way she reflects her anger is not like the usual

people by shouting or yelling but by being the quiet way she pours it on poemsthat are the paradoxical issues of Emily Dickinson.

## Conclusions

Having analyzed Emily Dickinson’s selected poems, the writer can learn the paradoxical ideas, motives and reasons, and how the paradoxical attitude influences her poems. The writer also found that Emily Dickinson gathers her ideas from God, Bible, Transcendentalism movement, immortality, American Civil War, her recluse life, her disappointed in love, wild imagination, gender equality, and society during her life that was very cruel and a hypocrite. She then delivered these ideas through her poems. Her writing is a safe way to convey her paradoxical idea because in her lifetime the society was still controlled by the majority party. There is no place for individuals with different opinions and the society will call the individual’s crazy with his or her protest.

Her motives in writing the paradox issues are the way to protest God, family, society and to express her feeling freely through her poems. The paradox issues that influence her poems were based on her dominant father, the hypocrite society, and her pathetic love story which she has two men in her love life that both of them died young.

Paradoxical attitude makes her poems very interesting to be read and analyzed. Although in her lifetime only a few of her poems are published, not even ten poems among nearly 1800 poems she has. Her paradoxical attitude such as, her religion is unclear, not marrying until her death in fifty-six years old, she chooses to live a secluded life but no one knows the real reason until her death, she just wears a white dress and never uses the other color, and she also refuses to convert though her father was a devout Calvinist.

One of the most important cultural influences of the Dickinson period is the

literary and philosophical movement known as Transcendentalism. In addition, Charlotte Alexander in his book *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (1965: 104) says:

"Emily Dickinson's thought has often been compared to Transcendentalism, the 19th-century philosophy-religion of nature made famous by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau"

Transcendentalism was a system based on a belief in the essential unity of nature and the inherent goodness of humanity. The Transcendentalism also advocates social, religious and political reform. They supported the Free Religion and abolitionist movements in that era. They also helped establish various utopian societies. Although Dickinson was never affiliated with the Transcendentalists, the movement's influence was pervasive. And some say that Emily Dickinson has to make Transcendentalism as her basic idea in writes a poem.

Moreover Emerson, as one of the first pioneer Transcendentalism, lived fewer than one hundred miles from Dickinson. He is also known to have visited Dickinson's brother, Austin, and his wife in their home which is next door with Emily. One example of her poems that is a presentation of nature is "*Hope*" *Is the Thing with Feathers*, particularly it is a depiction of the bird's beneficent effects, shows affinities to Transcendentalist views. Since this research is a discussion of American Paradox Representation reflected in Emily Dickinson's poems, the writer then gives some conclusion, as follows :

1. In the poem, "I know that He exists", this poem is Emily Dickinson's perspective about God, she displays her complicated feeling about God and about the society

during her life, whose become a God seeker. She said that people really cannot survive direct contact with the Almighty. Besides that, this poem becomes paradox because she said God is play game, hide and seek, in this poem.

2. In the poem, "*The Brain- is wider than the sky*", is very interesting because she compares a physically small object "*The Brain*" to vast, huge spaces such as "*the sky*" and "*the sea*" as well as a theoretically large figure "*God*" this poem is so paradox. The purpose of Dickinson's search in this poem is the possibility of conferring meaning to a meaningless, trying to find the outlines, the limiting of meaning and truth.
3. In the poem, "*Hope*" *Is the Thing with Feathers*", Dickinson creates a metaphor of "*Hope*" an abstract thing through a visible and real thing that is singing bird. The hope is like a bird that continues to fly inside, even in the dark time hope can offer some encouragement. Every human need hope in life, no one gets to live a pleasant life without it because hope is what makes you stand up when you are feeling down. It is what people need in order to continue living. Many people have been struggling to obtain hope, but deep down in soul hope perches and waits for calling.
4. In the poem "*Pain- expands the Time*", the pain she was experiencing when she loses her love for twice is the greatest reason for her to writes this poem. The paradox here is when most people write about the pain they usually write a poem about a concrete situation, the pain she felt or what caused it, that is a rule to write a poem. But when Dickinson writes a poem about the pain she writes what pain is and what pain can do.

5. In the poem “*One need not be a Chamber- to be Haunted*”, Emily Dickinson writes this striking poem, she chooses to live a deprived life in her father's home, but still has the paradox side about her choices. For her, one side home is where she is safe and which allows her room and freedom to think but it is also a place of routine and confinement. She also argues that people should fear their minds more than any tangible things in this poem. She says that regrets, guilt, imagination are more dangerous and deathly than meeting a ghost at midnight, galloping through a dangerous abbey or being stalked by an assassin in one's home.
6. The poem “*Much madness is most divine Sense*” shows how Emily Dickinson talks about those who think independently and perceives beyond the present or the appearance of things and assess what real dangers lie ahead for people. But to the obtuse majority, these few perceptive individuals are mad and considered dangerous to the complacency and conventional wisdom of the majority. She also has an idea that madness could ever be sensible or vice versa. She believes that the majority is not discerning, else agreeing with them and being called sensible by them would not qualify a person. For her as being mad, further since the majority is not discerning, disagreeing with them makes a person sensible. This poem can also reflect her anger because of the unfair society of her era, she was described as quiet spoken and demure. Dickinson does not hold back her strongest sentiments when it comes to writes them.

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