

Comparative Analysis of The Sunset and Winter Dawn

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This century has been marked by the vivid interest of American poets in Chinese literature and poetry. In the initial decades, many American poets followed the trend and imitated or translated Chinese poetry. However, Kenneth Rexroth not only followed the movement but also made a legacy. He translated Chinese poetry into English and kept a keen check on the merits of Chinese literature. The essay focuses on the comparative [analysis of the two Chinese poems “Sunset” and “Winter Dawn”](#), translated by Kenneth Rexroth. The two poems were originally taken from Tu Fu’s poetry, which is regarded as one of the finest poets of the Tang dynasty. (Rexroth; Owen; Hung)

In the poem “Sunset,” the poet has beautifully portrayed the scene of the sunset. With the help of different examples and imageries, the poet has signified the evening’s beauty in a way that the reader can almost get the feel of seeing the scene by himself. The daytime transition happens at sunset; the darkness completely takes over the vibrant daylight; thus, evenings have always been of great significance. The poet has beautifully described the scene by describing various other natural elements like the scents of flowers, insects, and the bird’s chirp. The imagery and the description in the poem significantly signify the poet’s admiration of Mother Nature. The description of the valleys and the rising smoke of cooking symbolizes the poet’s affection for the bucolic or rural life. The poet has glorified the sunset scene by using various fancy phrases like “the sunset glittering on the beads of curtains” The details and highlighting of the subtle things from the scene have always been one of the beauties of poetry. Like in this poem, the poet has unveiled his fondness for the subtle details in the initial verse. The glare of the sunlight falls from the slanting window panes. It makes the curtain beads appear like shiny pearls. It is very common to think that lightning has a powerful impact on the overall scenery; the settling sun’s glare has cast an enchanting effect on the flowers and made them bloom more sweetly. The poet has felt that effect and exhibited it in his poetry by using the phrase “spring flowers bloom in the valley.” The verse also gives the reader another hint about the spring season. The gardens alongside the river appeared to be filled with a perfume scent, as it is spring season, flowers are blooming to their fullest, and the sunset is making the overall scenario more enchanting. Evenings are always marked as quiet time, and it makes the surroundings feel quieter. The poet has depicted this calmness in the poem “smoke of cooking fires drift over the slow barges” the analogy of the barges helps the readers directly get the idea of the slowness that prevails at the hour of sunset. The poet has also portrayed the scene, keeping in detail all the subtle details as the sun sets and the birds start returning to their home like the setting sun is an indicator. The cool wafts in the spring afternoons help the swarms to float in the breeze. Tu Fu’s poetry always has a hidden message associated with the pictorial description of Nature; in the last verses, the poet talks about the wine’s potential. A cup of wine in the setting sun and spring’s afternoon can liberate a person from years of ordeal. (Rexroth 21)

Winter Dawn is one of the influential and moving poems of Tu Fu. The era in which the poem was written is significant on behalf of the An Lu Shan rebellion. However, the Kenneth Rexroth translations have objected to the modern English inculcation into the classical old Chinese literature. After spending a night with friends, chatting, and cruising, now each one of them is sitting drenched in their thoughts. The slow morning hour is being interrupted by the sounds of the cars outside. The verse “and the sound of the cars starting outside” has particularly intrigued the critics. However, the poet has still successfully given the idea of the car honking, impeding the dawn’s solace and interrupting the flow of the poet’s thoughts. The birds have got enough sleep, and it’s time to wake up; the morning light illuminates their nests to get them up. This is a widespread opinion that age is just a number; however, the greater the number, the greater the sac of memories and experiences. At the dawn hour, the poet, immersed in his memories, realizes that sooner he will witness the fortieth winter dawn of his life. At the tranquil dawn hour, the poet thinks about the lonely sunsets; when the person’s shadows grow beyond themselves, the Suborn past makes its way back into the mind. Here, the poet also signifies one of the obnoxious qualities of the memories that the past is like a whirlpool. When a memory comes out of the brain’s attic, the chain follows, and like the wild forest fire, there is a rush of memories. (Rexroth 5)

Chinese poems have always been valued for their potential to depict a scenario using minimal words; however, the emphasis on subtle detailing is so elaborative that the reader can get the whole picture in mind. The two poems “Sunset” and “Winter Dawn” are related to Mother Nature’s description in the two remarkably different timeframes. Carefully analyzing both poems, one can draw significant differences in both poems in a variety of aspects like the impact of life, the wheel of nature and most significantly, how the surroundings affect human thought processes. Both poems elaborate on the time scenario in a remarkable way, like in the poem Sunset, “Sunset glitters on the beads of curtains.” In contrast, in the poem “Winter Dawn, “the birds in the eaves are restless because of the noise and the light.” Thus, there is a distinct difference in the life activities associated with dusk and dawn. Nature is in harmony and follows the same patterns, like in the poem sunset the poet highlighted “sparrows hop and tumble in the branches” while comparatively in the poem winter dawn the poet said, “the birds in the eaves are restless use of the noise and the light.” The last and most significant difference between the two sets is how they see the memories. In the poem Sunset, the poet remarked that a thick cup of wine could make the person forget about all the pains in life, and somehow, the poet portrayed the wine as a miraculous solution for liberating from the past. However, in contrast, the poem Winter Dawn highlights the sunset as the time which brings painful memories and headlong shadows. Thus, the comparative analysis of the two poems has signified that the dusk and dawn hours not only affect the circadian rhythms, and life activities but also the thought processes of individuals. On a broader spectrum, the writer has addressed human nature in two different scenarios, yet keeping in focus all the subtle details of the human surroundings at sunset and dawn. The vivid description helps the reader in getting immersed in the scenario sketched by the poet. This has always been regarded as a strong feature of ancient Chinese literature and Kenneth Rexroth did justice to it while translating it into the English language. (Rexroth 5, 21; Owen)

Works Cited

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