

Bei dao's poem recollection analysis

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



I will be using Bei Dao's poem "Recollection" to demonstrate how his use of imagery and writing style can give a 'simple' poem written during a time of political turmoil in China during the 1970's can have so much more in depth meaning as well as how his poetry baffles critics. The title of the poem, 'Recollection', suggests to readers an act of remembrance or reminiscence of something, someone, or a sequence of events that Bei Dao wants/hopes to elaborate and tell his readers about.

Here, the title of the poem does not indicate a simple reminiscence, but serving a far deeper meaning and purpose as well as a grasp of experience. One is unable to analyze and understand exactly why Bei Dao uses 'Recollection' as a title, as the title acts as a form of teasing and attraction for the reader to follow through and read the powerful words which are written down word for word; hear and visualize the imagery that is created within.

As one reads through the poem word for word, Bei Dao's use of imagery is instantly caught, as the poem is based solely on the imagery of visualization and sound. Candle light / flickers on each face / leaving not a trace / the shadow's spray / strikes the white wall lightly'. Throughout these five lines in the poem, each line contains at least one word that emphasizes and gives readers an image, i. e. light, flickers, trace, spray, strikes, white. Here, the imagery of visualization Bei Dao creates for his readers leaves them pondering about in a 'unrealistic' state of mind, where readers are able to understand that Bei Dao is using his imagination to portray a deeper message perhaps.

The visual imagery here can be tied in with the title as the visual images are pleasant, which hints the recollection of a pleasant and pure beauty that which the poet himself has encountered with different people (faces) on several occasions, although these people seem not to leave a trace which hints the numerous amounts of people the poet might have encountered with to emphasize his connection with all those he has come into contact with. Read also [Critical appreciation of the poem "Old Ladies' Home"](#).

As 'Recollection' was written during a time of change and revolution, along with our understanding of how Bei Dao opposed the Maoist society, the first five lines use of unrealistic/imaginative imagery along with how these five lines tie in with the title, can suggest the numerous amounts of people who felt the same way about the changing society of China.

Thus, the use of the unrealistic/imaginative words creating this visual imagery is not stating that these encounters are in the poets head, but were most and very possibly true events - the people whom the poet has come into contact with are those who are true people, people who are unable to be contained and still have their own free thoughts, feelings as well as emotions; the unrealistic and imaginative part being the Chinese government that was reshaping and reforming its people in hope that all would think like a Maoist where freedom of thought, speech, etc was suppressed.

Here, the poet, Bei Dao is simply arguing that suppression of thought, speech, freedom, etc... are unrealistic achievements that the government is pressing for, for they will never succeed. Directly following the use of visual

imagery, after the fifth line in the poem, one might notice how the imagery and tone, shifts in a very smooth, eloquent, and contained matter. the guitar hanging from the wall / begins to sound in the darkness / like the masthead light reflected in water / stealing whispers'.

Like the first five lines previously discussed, the use of imagery is crucial, however instead of using just visual imagery here, Bei Dao adds in sound. The 'guitar' mentioned in line 5 is a 'hint' of sound, as it can also have deeper meaning; Bei Dao continues his use of words to symbolize sounds such as 'whispers', etc. and seems to get more serious in contrast to his pleasant tone from before. The new tactic where Bei Dao uses the addition of sound affects to his visual imagery creates a more in depth and less constrained opinion based on the people and the Maoist society; in retrospect, the peoples opinions towards the Maoist society as they seem to be speaking up for themselves after being suppressed for so long.

This is caught as Bei Dao uses more powerful imagery, tying in both vision and sound i. e. 'begins to sound in the darkness', 'darkness' merely representing the suppression of the people, and 'begins to sound' to emphasize that his encounter with all these people have shown him something different, as they seem to be starting to stand up for themselves by sharing opinions, which by itself is going against this 'darkness'.

Subsequently/Next, Bei Dao gets more serious about the issue as he states 'like the masthead light reflected in water', the 'masthead light' representing all the people in China, and the 'reflected water' being a mere representation of purity and innocence or a ripple affect, symbolizing how all the people

who are suppressed seem to realize their own rights and are slowly starting to rub off on one another as more and more people get influenced and start fighting for themselves and their own freedom and happiness. Notice, how drastic the change is from the beginning of the poem's first five lines to the poem's last four lines.

Although the first five lines of the poem are focused on the visual images that briefly give its readers an understanding of what he, as a poet, is trying to express in his own words, mind-set, and understanding towards society/things from his own experience; one can see how the visual images tie in with sound, creating an even more dramatic and strong emotional effect, just like his encounters with people during the time of the Chinese revolution when China was a Maoist society where people were being forced into suppression.

Bei Dao's tactic and use of visual imagery ties in with sound to create and tell a story of what he had experienced, along with the millions of other Chinese, as he uses 'Recollection' to represent not only himself who suffered, but all citizens. Here, Bei Dao uses the creativity, tone, language, trope and theme of this poem to emphasize and be a representative of all the people who were stuck in a Maoist society, as he states the people's capacity for freedom and their uprising and realization that suppression is acknowledged, however not and will never be achieved.