

Commentary on Zhang Guangkui's "The Healer's Flame"

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Abstract:

Zhang Guangkui's poem "The Healer's Flame" praises Dr. Chen Qiaolian for her exceptional medical skills and kindness, using a typical English sonnet form with the rhyme scheme "abab cdcd efef gg" and iambic pentameter. Structured logically, its first three stanzas build up: the first emphasizes physical healing, the second shows psychological effects, and the third highlights her professional passion and selfless care. The final two lines, the climax, express love, respect, and gratitude via "Dear Chen". Vivid images— "a beacon" (symbolizing the doctor) and "the darkest storm" (metaphorizing illness)—enhance the effect. Choosing the classical sonnet form links to Renaissance humanism, as the doctor's care embodies such spirit, creating a form-content resonance to convey sincere praise.

Keywords: Zhang Guangkui; "The Healer's Flame"; English sonnet; humanism; imagery

The Healer's Flame

Zhang Guangkui¹

My friend Chen Qiaolian, a doctor true,
With golden eyes that pierce through stone and night,
Her gentle hands can heal where pain once grew,
Her spirit's kind, a beacon shining bright.

She sees beyond the flesh to what's inside,
A heart that aches, a soul in dire need,
With wisdom deep, where mercy does reside,
She brings redemption, planting hope's small seed.

¹ Zhang Guangkui (张广奎) is a Professor of English Literature at Shenzhen University.

Her fire burns with purpose, never cold,
A warmth that wraps around each broken form,
In her embrace, the lost find love untold,
She guides them safely through life's darkest storm.

So here's to you, dear Chen, with eyes of gold,
A healer's touch, a heart both brave and bold. (Zhang, n.d.)

Zhang Guangkui's poem "The Healer's Flame" highly praises the friend Dr. Chen Qiaolian's magical medical technique and kind heart toward the patients. The poem is written in the typical English sonnet with the rhyme scheme of "ababedcdefefgg". And each line is written in iambic pentameter. With the strict meter, the poet has fully expressed his admiration for the doctor's profession and soul.

The poem is written in the strict sonnet stanzas, that is to say, four stanzas in whole, the last two-line stanza wraps up the whole poem with the description of the doctor's eyes, touch and heart. This is, according to the rule of the typical sonnet, is the summit and generalization of the whole poem. And the first three stanzas have helped to reach this summit. In the first stanza, "golden eyes", "gentle hands" and "her spirit" are minutely described. The third line says, "Her gentle hands can heal where pain once grew". It echoes the title "The Healer's Flame". Thus the first stanza emphasizes the physical effect of the medical cure. On the basis of this, the second stanza presents the psychological effect of the doctor's medical effect: "beyond the flesh", "planting hope's small seed". The third stanza foregrounds the doctor's enthusiasm for the profession and unselfish love for the patients. The first line "Her fire burns with purpose, never cold" echoes the title "The Healer's Flame". It delineates the doctor's love for the profession and the clients. Thus, the first three stanzas have prepared the summit in the

last two lines. The whole poem is very organic and logical. The apostrophe “Dear Chen” in the last stanza has expressed the patient’s love, respect and gratitude for the doctor.

In order to reinforce the poetic effect, the poem has used several vivid images to describe the patient’s great pain and the doctor’s magical curing process. In the first stanza, it says the doctor’s spirit is “a beacon shining bright”. The word “beacon” indicates that in the patient’s heart, the doctor is a beacon, which has helped to give direction and greatly comfort the patient. “The beacon” has encourages the patient to overcome the disease. Another image is “the darkest storm” in the third stanza. It is the metaphor the disease and pain. Against this storm is the doctor’s medical cure and psychological comfort. And this image has echoed the first image “the beacon”. Thus, the doctor is a bright beacon in the darkest storm.

In this poem, the poet Zhang Guangkui has used the classical sonnet to express the love and gratitude for the doctor Chen Qiaolian. The old form plus the contemporary content can fully express the praise and gratitude. Of course, the poet can write the poem in the form of “verse libre”, that is to say, in free verse. However, the poet has chosen to write the poem in the form of classical English sonnet, or the Shakespeare sonnet. The reader, in reading this sonnet, can naturally recall the humanist spirit in the Renaissance era in Britain and Europe. And this humanist concern and spirit is just the doctor’s spirit in this poem. The doctor’s love for the patients is the vivid embodiment of the humanist thoughts in the Renaissance era. This echo in form and content is carefully designed by the poet Zhang Guangkui.

References

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