

MAJOR THEMES AND CONCEPTS IN THE CYCLE OF POEMS "THE CHILD ALONE"

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The goal of this article is to analyze the main topics and concepts in the cycle of poems "The Child Alone" by the Scottish writer and the largest representative of neo-romanticism Robert Louis Stevenson.

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson had a very hard childhood. He was the only child in his family and he was often sick. At the age of three he got tuberculosis. The boy had a brilliant imagination. He lived in his own world of fantasy, that is why he was never bored. His memories from childhood became a starting point for writing a collection of poetry "A Child's Garden of Verses" which includes a cycle of poems "The Child Alone" [1]. All the works from it are united by one topic. This topic is child loneliness. Because of the sickness in his childhood Robert did not have a lot of friends. The only people around him were his parents, his nurse Alison Cunningham (known as Cummy) and his step-brother Lloyd Osbourne (an American author). With the last one Stevenson spent lots of his time playing with tin soldiers and even being engaged in writing [2, p. 16].

The cycle is opened with the poem "The Unseen Playmate", the main topics of which are loneliness and lack of friends. An invisible friend, who does not exist in real life, is the only one who wants to play with the boy and spend time with him, because he is always near.

*...He lies in the laurels, he runs on the grass,
He sings when you tinkle the musical glass;
Whene'er you are happy and cannot tell why,
The Friend of the Children is sure to be by!* [3, p. 81]

It is important to say that Stevenson wrote the word "Friend" with the capital letter though it is not a proper name. Lack of friends in real life was the reason why the author livened a friend from his imagination and made him real.

In spite of the dark undertone, the poem is dynamic, which we can see from its structure and rhythm. It helps the reader to feel and understand the author's optimistic outlook.

Stevenson came from a family of marine engineers. The fate of marine career was waiting for him, but Robert did it not practically but with the help of his writing talent in lines of his works. One is the poem "My Ship and I". The author fantasizes that he became the captain of a ship and started to explore new lands.

*...O it's then you'll see me sailing through the rushes and the reeds,
And you'll hear the water singing at the prow;
For beside the dolly sailor, I'm to voyage and explore,
To land upon the island where no dolly was before,
And to fire the penny cannon in the bow...* [3, p. 83]

In this work, the author created a bright image of a dolly sailor, who helped him to overcome all obstacles and get to the land on which no one was before. Through this image the reader understands that the author needs friends to support

The topic of shipping and sea is mentioned in other poems as "Block city", "The Little Land", "The Land of Story-books". We can also explain this mention of open water in different way. A little boy was tired of illnesses and loneliness, that is why this endless sea was attractive to him. He wanted to have freedom as waves have. But he could only do this in his imagination.

Despite the fact that the boy never saw the sea, thanks to his dad, who was a marine engineer, and thanks to tons of literature, he was able to imagine clearly waves, salt water and fresh wind.

Stevenson learnt how to read at the age of seven. The boy was very sensitive, that is why a lot of authors influenced him. Among them one could name William Shakespeare, Michel de Montaigne, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, Herbert Spencer and Marcus Aurelius. They inspired Robert and in some way, these books were his teachers. [4]

Reading and travelling in the world of fantasy including real-life walks through the pages of books found place in the poems "The Land of Story-books", "Picture Books in Winter".

*...And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed... [3, p. 93]*

*...Water now is turned to stone
Nurse and I can walk upon;
Still we find the flowing brooks
In the picture story-books... [3, p. 87]*

Ethical issues are raised in works. In the cycle we see author's interest to the personal beginning, Stevenson's life position in his childhood is described here. Despite illnesses the boy was very active, he was never bored and behaved like imaginative creative child. [1].

The main idea is hidden in the mood of Stevenson's poetry, the cycle described being romantic in mood.

Stevenson is a representative of English neo-romanticism, that is why there is no wonder that the world described in poems is the world of fantasy and dreams. We feel the gap between reality and the transcendental world, the author wants to get there, to become there "the king".

*...And all about was mine, I said,
The little sparrows overhead,
The little minnows, too.
This was the world and I was king... [3, p. 85]*

The world of fantasy and imagination created by a little Robert Stevenson, who was tired of illnesses and loneliness, is described in the cycle "The Child Alone". Looking at the biography of Stevenson we can say that the main motifs which appear in "The Child Alone" are child's loneliness and lasting illness. The main emotional tone of the cycle is optimistic, despite the fact that the author's hard childhood is hidden in poems.

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