

Analysis of *I would I were a Careless Child*

Qianqian Sun *

Shandong Jiaotong University, Hexing Road No. 1508, Weihai, Shandong Province, China

928001777@qq.com

* corresponding author

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Abstract: The poem *I would I were a Careless Child* is created by the famous poet George Byron. In this paper, the author intends to analyze the poem from the following aspects, including research background and purpose, the contents of the poem, the rhyme scheme, images and rhetoric devices. There are seven stanzas of the poem and it can be divided into three parts. The first part is the first paragraph expressing the wish of the poet to be a careless child directly. The second part includes paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, in which there is much control as well as depression of the reality. The last part is the last stanza. In stanza 7, the poet hopes that he can be as free as a bird. The rhyme scheme is a typical alternate rhyme and the poem is iambic tetrameter. There are also many images in the poem, and they are very helpful to the creation of the atmosphere and the expression of the true deep emotion of the poet. There are some rhetoric devices used in this poem, including repetition, contrast and comparison, alliteration, metaphor as well as personification, all of which are composed well to describe the deep feelings of the poet.

1. Research Background and Purpose

The poem *I would I were a Careless Child* is created by the famous poet George Byron, in which he expresses his wishes to be a child. The poet writes this poem because he wants to show the good memories of the happy old days and the unease of the adult world. Through the words, it can be seen that there are typical romantic features in it. By saying the wish to be a child, Byron speaks out the desire for freedom, happiness as well as wildness in life.

In this paper, the author aims to analyze the poem from the following aspects: contents, the rhyme scheme, images and functions, rhetoric devices and special words. In this way, it can be reasonable for readers to get the main idea and the central thesis. Moreover, the poetic features will be concluded by analyzing the five former angles.

2. Research Aspects

2.1. Contents.

The whole poem includes 7 stanzas, which can be divided into 3 parts. The first part contains the first paragraph, in which the poet expresses the wish to be a careless child directly. Through the lines, it can be seen that the ideal life of the poet is that filled with freedom and wildness without control.

The second part contains paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. In these five stanzas, the poet describes the dark and unease reality that is full of control and depression. In stanza 2, the poet depicts the equality among people. Although he has the splendid name and superior to some others, he is not willing to be touched or surrounded by other insincere people. In stanza 3, the poet says now that he is an adult, the clear and sincere world can be only reached in dreams, but for the real world, it does not exist. In stanza 4, it can be seen that true love and friendship exist only when you are young. As one grows older, some true feelings or friends will leave away for ever. In stanza 5, the lines show that the relationship among people is very indifferent. Even though they stay together, they are unable to be friends. In stanza 6, the poet says even beautiful appearance can flow away. Through

all the five stanzas, the poet wants to express the unsatisfying realistic world.

The last part is the last stanza of the poem. In stanza 7, the poet hopes that he can be as free as a bird that can fly away from the reality and find a place of his own.

2.2. The Rhyme Scheme.

The rhyme scheme in this poem is ababcbcd, which is a typical alternate rhyme and is also named cross rhyme. The poem is iambic tetrameter, making it sound quite melodious and easy to reflect the mood of the poet. Unlike many of his poems with four lines in each stanza, there are eight lines in each one, which creates a kind of atmosphere where the feelings of the poet seem to be endless and cyclical. In this way, we can find that the wishes of the poet to be a careless child is very strong as well as zealous because he has so much to say that four lines in each stanza are not enough at all.

2.3. Images and Functions.

There are quite a few images in this poem, and they are very helpful to the creation of the atmosphere and the expression of the true deep emotion at the bottom of the heart of the poet.

First of all, there are some images expressing and symbolizing freedom and happiness in the past. In the first stanza, there are the images of cave, wild, wave, mountain, rocks and billow. All these images symbolize the freedom and wildness as a small child. As for cave, it signifies the wish to cross the time tunnel to go back to the childhood and also the good happy memories of the past. As for wild, it is very direct to speak out the expanse without any limit. For wave, mountain, rocks and billow, these images tokens the changes and colorful life as a small kid. The life of youth is quite strong, earnest and powerful, which is very different from the pale and quiet life of an adult.

Besides, there are some images that symbolize the overwhelming depression and pale quiet life. There are such kind of images in the second stanza, including hands, slaves and dark shades. As for the image of hands, it symbolizes the management and control from others, which makes the poet feel quite unequal and not free. For the image slaves, it signifies the inequality with no love among people. In the world of adults, there are something that is much more important than pure happiness, such as wealth, social position and so on. Even the poet is a baron and has a good social position, he does not feel happy or good at all. As for the image dark shades, it signifies the escape from the real world, which sounds a little pessimistic. However, it also means that he has no way to go back to childhood and have to face the real world.

In addition, there are also some images about wishes and future. The glen, wings, turtle and nest in the last stanza serve as this function. Although it is hard to return the childhood, the poet thinks as long as his heart is full of hope and freedom, he can also be a child again. As for the image glen, it tokens the colorful and changeling life that he longs for. For the images turtle and wings, they signifies freedom and happiness in his heart that is just like a happy free bird without any control or limit. For the image nest, it symbolizes the destination and life that the poet looks forward to. Just like every happy bird has a nest, every happy man has his own destination and wishes in his heart.

Finally, there are special images expressing complex feelings of the poet. For example, there is the image of bowl in the fourth stanza. On the one hand, bowl signifies the wine-and-meat friends who are not real friends or foes and the relationship between them is very general. They eat together at the same table, but there is no friendship or love. On the other hand, the image of bowl also signifies the practical reality that he cannot escape. Just like everyone must eat something, the poet also has to live in the real life. As a result, the bowl means that the poet wants to find a kind of compromise between the ideal and the reality. He will accept the outside world, but he will also hold on to his own wishes and dreams in his heart.

2.4. Rhetoric Devices.

There are quite a number of rhetoric devices used in this poem, including repetition, contrast and comparison, alliteration, metaphor as well as personification.

For a start, repetition is widely used in the poem in some stanzas. For example, in the first stanza, repetition is used in the two lines “or roaming through the dusky wild, or bounding o’er the dark

blue wave". In the second stanza, there is also repetition in the lines "take back these cultured lands, take back this name of splendid sound! I hate the touch of servile hands, I hate the slaves that cringe around." In the sixth stanza, there is still repetition in the lines "And woman, lovely woman! Thou, My hope, my comforter, my all?" By using repetition, the poet speak out his feelings in a strong and powerful way. The repetition of some words also makes the poem sound very melodious.

Additionally, there is also contrast and comparison applied in some stanzas. For example, in the first stanza, there is contrast between Highland and Saxon. In the heart of the poet, Highland equals to the happiness and freedom of a careless child as he grows up in Scotland there with his mother till the age of ten[1]. Nevertheless, Saxon, or in other words England, equals to the pale life in reality. Here, the poet makes a contrast between the moment and the past. In the third stanza, there is contrast and comparison between the dream and the reality. In the dream where he is happy and free, the poet hates to be waken up into the reality where there is little love or passion. In the fourth stanza, there is also contrast and comparison of the emotion as well as relationship between people of the past and the moment. In the past as a young child, the poet can feel the true feelings ,deep emotion and sincere friendship and love. However, after he grows up, he finds that friends are not real ones and love is not pure. It is not the outside world changes but the inner world of people turns. Consequently, he hopes that he can keep the qualities and mood state as a small child.

Moreover, alliteration can be found in many of the lines in the poem. For example, in the third stanza, there are lines "Ah! Why do dark'ning shades conceal/ the hour when man must cease to be?" In the fourth stanza, there is alliteration in the line "Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul". In the fifth stanza, alliteration is also widely used such as "Whom rank or chance, whom wealth or power" and "Give me again a faithful few, in years and feelings still the same". In the sixth stanza, the repetition of the sound [w] and [s] in the lines "without a sigh would I resign/ this busy scene of splendid woe".

Still, there is metaphor in the last stanza. In the sixth line, the poet compares himself to a turtle in order to show his passion to be free.

Personification is also used in the same line in the last stanza. Th poet applies the word "her" instead of "it" because in his eyes, the bird is just like a girl.

3. Summary

In this paper, the author analyzes the research background and purpose, the contents, the rhyme scheme, images and rhetoric devices of the poem.

The first part expresses the wish of the poet to be a careless child directly. In the second part, there is much control and depression because of the reality. In the last part, the poet hopes that he can be as free as a bird. The typical alternate rhyme and iambic tetrameter is also very helpful to express the circular desire for freedom and happiness. The images in the poem are very helpful to the creation of the atmosphere and the expression of the true deep emotion of the poet. The rhetoric devices used in this poem including repetition, contrast and comparison, alliteration, metaphor as well as personification are combined well to describe the deep feelings of the poet and make the poem quite vivid and easy for readers to imagine them.

In a word, both the contents and the devices reflect the romantic features of the poet.

References

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