

Poetry analysis: joseph von eichendorff

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Desires Joseph von Eichendorff is seen as one of the most famous poets of the German Romanticism.

Eichendorff composed many poems about his desires, the romantic world of joy, the simple intimacy, and the experience of nature as a way to God to create a mental antithesis to his violent affected military life. In this manner, his poem “ Moonlight Night”, written in 1837, reflects his desires and his closeness to nature and to God. The speaker of the poem describes his feelings and impressions of a moonlit night presenting nature and its beauty in a very detailed way with the use of illustrative language.

The poem consists of three four-line stanzas. The stanzas are written in an alternating end rhyme scheme and it is striking that the first and the third stanza both contain an imperfect rhyme.

In addition, there are enjambed line-breaks between the respective first and second line of the first and third stanza. Due to the similarity of the structure of these stanzas, the second stanza seemed to be framed and the poem appears as a circle. The rhythmic meter is iambic with alternate female and masculine cadences. Each stanza features one sentence.

Also, the poem radiates deep peace and harmony; it seems relaxing to the reader which is reinforced by repeating of the adjectives “ quiet” and “ soft”. The headline “ Moonlight Night” and the first stanza give the frame of the story: “ It was like Heaven’s glimmer/ had [quietly] kissed the Earth’s skin /that in Her blossom’s shimmer/ She had to dream of Him”, it is night and the speaker seems to dream.

The heaven is used as a metaphor which symbolizes God and the earth is an image for the mortal. The heaven and earth – being personified – interact with each other in the form of a kiss.

The interaction of the kiss stands for the love that God gives. The “blossom’s shimmer” is understood as the godly shine which can be interpreted as warmth and love which God spreads over the earth. The word “quietly” makes the moment – of the heaven touching the earth – intimate and creates a calm atmosphere. In the second stanza, the speaker focuses on the nature: “The breeze was gently walking/ through wheat fields near and far;/ the woods were softly talking/ so bright shone ev’ry star.

” The speaker personifies the breeze which is walking through the wheat fields.

The breeze being sent from heaven – thus from God – is touching the woods and wheat fields “gently” and “softly” which again creates a harmonic atmosphere and the touch shows the connection of God and mortals. The breeze goes “near and far” which again shows God’s endless love for the earth. Translating word to word from the original, German version, the second line would say “ears of the corn swayed gently” which also puts the description of the nature in context to the first stanza: ears of corn are a Christian symbol for the Eucharist.

The nature is used as a symbol for the religious feelings of the speaker.

The speaker appears the first time as a first-person narrative in the last stanza: “And thus my soul extended/ its wings through skies to roam:/ O’er quiet lands suspended, my soul was flying home. ” Importantly, that the

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speaker uses the adjective “ quiet” again to underline the calm and intimate atmosphere of the setting. The speaker gives a comparison saying that his soul is opening its wings like a bird that gets ready to take off.

The speaker dresses his soul with wings which shows the deep emotion that the speaker perceives through the nature. Caught in the perception of the heavenly-touched, harmonic, and beautiful nature the speaker lets go all earthly bonds for his soul to be free; the here and now is not enough for the speaker which is a typical topic of the late romanticist movement. Furthermore, the first stanza stated that the heaven (god) is moving down to touch the earth and the last stanza is saying that the soul is flying up home.

The heaven can be interpreted as the home of the soul, which is the Christian paradise. The harmonic atmosphere which was carefully built up during the whole poem is hurt by the last two lines which imply the death of the speaker and therefore puts the mortal speaker in contrast to immortal beauty of the nature. The poem “ Moonlight Night” gives a typical example of the romanticism showing the speaker’s love of nature and his religiousness.

The religiousness is not only seen in the words but also in the structure of the poem: the number three. There are three stanzas and three is also the cross sum of the number twelve (the poem consists of 12 lines). The number three represents the Trinity which is the matrix of the Christian faith.

Eichendorff created a poem which is – especially despite its brevity – very deep and impressive, showing the infinity of the beauty and the desire to be close to god.