



Undergraduate Honors Theses

---

2019-08-09

# Nature and the Poet: A Comparison of the Poetry of Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff and Kobayashi Issa

Jane Cox

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub\\_uht](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub_uht)

---

## BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Cox, Jane, "Nature and the Poet: A Comparison of the Poetry of Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff and Kobayashi Issa" (2019).  
*Undergraduate Honors Theses*. 91.  
[https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub\\_uht/91](https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub_uht/91)

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

Honors Thesis

NATURE AND THE POET:  
A COMPARISON OF THE POETRY OF  
JOSEPH FREIHERR VON EICHENDORFF  
AND KOBAYASHI ISSA

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment  
of graduation requirements for University Honors

by  
Jane Margaret Cox

German Department  
Brigham Young University  
August 2019

Advisor: Thomas Spencer

Honors Coordinator: Mark Purves



## ABSTRACT

### NATURE AND THE POET: A COMPARISON OF THE POETRY OF JOSEPH FREIHERR VON EICHENDORFF AND KOBAYASHI ISSA

Jane Margaret Cox

German Department

Bachelor of Arts; Bachelor of Science

This thesis examines the bearing that metaphysical philosophy about nature has on two late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century poets. Although living in different hemispheres and cultures, the works of Romantic poet Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff and haikai Kobayashi Issa both used interactions with nature to illustrate their own personal experiences. However, their differing metaphysical beliefs concerning nature impacted their presentation of their experiences as well as their experiences themselves. Eichendorff viewed nature as a medium through which the divine can choose to communicate. Nature's purpose is to act as a vehicle for the divine. His descriptions of nature often focused on landscapes, portraying the sum of nature to be greater than any individual plant, animal, or geological feature that is part of the whole. In contrast, for Kobayashi Issa, nature has no underlying purpose. Instead, he focused solely on the individual components on nature, viewing himself as a fellow traveler through a transitory world with other creatures found in nature. In addition to affecting what natural phenomena the poems discuss, the differing metaphysical beliefs of the poets affected

how they reacted to nature. Eichendorff always experienced the underlying tension of another presence in nature, whether it manifests itself or not. This often caused him to experience metaphysical grief and uncertainty. Issa did not experience this. Rather, he experienced human grief in his life and turned to nature to contextualize his own suffering. I consider the lives of both poets as well as their works that deal specifically with grief.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Marc Yamada, Dr. Paul Cox, and Dr. Masayuki Kishimoto for their encouragement and assistance.

I would also like to thank Eichendorff and Issa, for their beautiful poetry.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page .....	i
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
I. Introduction .....	1
II. Historical and Cultural Background.....	4
III. Formal and Linguistic Aspects of the Poems .....	12
IV. Poetry Analysis.....	14
Der Abend .....	15
The nature of man .....	17
Midsummer, visiting my daughters grave.....	19
Wehmut .....	24
Dichterlos .....	28
Spring rises.....	30
Bamboo shoots .....	33
Vom Berge .....	35
The dew of the night.....	38
V. Conclusion .....	39
VI. Works Cited.....	41





## Introduction

Written between 1790 and 1831, the poetry of the German Romantic poet Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff and the Japanese haikai poet (a poet who specializes in haiku), Kobayashi Issa both employ nature imagery to communicate internal experience. Both do so using economical poetic forms: The song-form (*Liedstrophe*) of the German romantic lyric or the rigorously sparse Japanese tradition of haiku and tanka. Both poets were deeply spiritual, although their religious traditions differed greatly. Eichendorff was a devout Catholic, while Issa became a monk in the Pure Land sect of Buddhism. Their socioeconomic backgrounds also permit no comparison. Eichendorff descended from Germanic nobility on his mother's side and was a moderately successful civil servant before devoting himself to poetry. Issa came from a poor farming family, which he left at the age of fourteen due to conflict and his parent's inability to support him. Eichendorff came from Prussian aristocracy, while Issa lived and died in a Japan completely closed to the outside world<sup>1</sup>.

Given these differences in background, one might doubt the fruitfulness of a comparative reading of these men's poetry, yet certain aspects of their work clearly call for it. Issa and Eichendorff were contemporaries. Both lived during a transitional phase for their respective countries. Eichendorff wrote during the late romantic period, when industrialism, capitalism, and liberalism were stamping out the feudal Christian order in the area known as Germany today, changing everyday life<sup>2</sup>. Issa wrote as the preparations to open Japan to a wider world were beginning, exposing the country to the technological and cultural impacts of a broader global community<sup>3</sup>. In Japan, Portuguese,

---

<sup>1</sup> Morton 119-131

<sup>2</sup> Zmora 165

<sup>3</sup> Morton 135

Dutch, and occasionally German scientists and traders began to share their knowledge under strict supervision from the Tokugawa regime. Issa's and Eichendorff's rural imagery acquire poignancy against this backdrop of modernization.

While both poets wrote lyrical poems focused on nature imagery, Eichendorff and Issa are divided by their dramatically different understandings of nature, which can largely be explained by their respective religious and metaphysical beliefs. For Eichendorff, nature is vehicle for a divine subject or monotheistic God. For Issa, nature is a community of fellow beings to which he himself belongs, beings who can to some degree identify with and sympathize with each other. Nature itself has no underlying purpose for Issa; it simply is. Thus Eichendorff seeks to connect with a deeper, divine essence in nature, a process that is fraught with uneasiness and tension, while Issa seeks merely to achieve unity with his fellow travelers on the path to enlightenment.

To illustrate this difference, I will analyze poetic works from both poets that deal with grief, as this emotion has a special relation to metaphysics. Both poets present intense personal instances of grief in their works, yet their griefs differ. Eichendorff's anguish is a consequence of metaphysical experience. As he encounters the heart of nature he also becomes more aware of its alterity, causing him to feel acute uncertainty and unease. As such, what grief Eichendorff's work describes is directly linked to his joy at encountering the divine through nature, forming a cycle. Eichendorff turns to nature in an attempt to connect with the divine, and the strangeness, fleetingness, or complete lack of such a connection generates and perpetuates grief.

In contrast to this, Issa's grief does not stem from a metaphysical encounter out in the countryside. The grief found in Issa's work is the kind that comes from daily life.

Given this human, almost animal grief, Issa turns to nature to recognize the ephemeral nature of his feelings and contextualize them within a Buddhist worldview. This allows him to de-intensify the sadness he feels

The poets' different understandings of nature and the grief they experienced are exemplified through the nature motifs the two chose to consider. Eichendorff focused on grand events in nature, such as storms, mountains, forests, and valleys, while Issa considered smaller, perhaps less impressive aspects such as birds, bugs, and flowers. Eichendorff presupposes that nature as a whole is unified, forming a way for man to encounter the divine. Issa, however, considered the different parts of nature as only separate beings, striving for their own goals and separate from an outside influence.

Before analyzing the poems, there is an important terminological distinction that must be made. The term “nature” connotes different things for Eichendorff and Issa. For Eichendorff, nature is a metaphysical quantity bigger than the sum of its parts, and unsurprisingly his poems tend to portray whole natural settings rather than single plants or animals. That is to say, the landscape represents a unified object through which the divine can communicate. In this paper I use nature to denote such an entity. For Issa, however, nature is not a collective object. Landscapes do not represent a greater thing than the individual plant, animals, or geological features embedded in them. Instead, nature is mere totality of individual beings in the animal and plant world. It is not a place for Issa to connect to the divine; instead he is a fellow traveler through life with these other creatures. To denote this conception of nature as only its parts, not the sum, I use the Japanese word for nature, 自然, in its romanized form, shizen. The kanji for \_\_ mean oneself and sort of thing or like, respectively.

## **Historical and Cultural Background**

Born in 1788, the son of a Prussian general and his Roman Catholic wife, Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff grew up with an aristocratic background<sup>4</sup>. His mother came from Catholic nobility from the Silesian area of Prussia, where Eichendorff was raised. The Prussian King Frederick William II, son of Frederick der Große, was one of the major political and military leaders of Europe at the time, and Eichendorff's father's rank of general was well-respected. Eichendorff's parents were devout, if private, Catholics, and their faith greatly influenced Eichendorff's own<sup>5</sup>. Tutored along with his older brother, Eichendorff began writing at an early age, producing a personal diary and a natural history at the age of 12.<sup>6</sup> He studied law and the humanities at Halle an der Saale, near the German city of Jena. It was during his time as a student that Eichendorff came into contact with prominent Romantic thinkers and writers including Joseph Görres<sup>7</sup>, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte<sup>8</sup>. Upon completing his studies, he fought in the liberation wars against Napoleon, both as an infantry man and a lieutenant.

Eichendorff's time in the military had a profound impact on his belief in God and character. Of this time Eichendorff wrote, „Der Krieg ist eine wahre Mannerschule; für mich war er es auf eine sehr ungewöhnliche und schmerzliche Art. Es ist, als wäre ich in diesen Strudel nur mit hineingezogen worden, um eine nichtswerthe Eitelkeit abzulegen,

---

<sup>4</sup> Beck 22

<sup>5</sup> Beck 45-46

<sup>6</sup> Beck 81-84

<sup>7</sup> Heuvel 129-132

<sup>8</sup> Beck 145-152

und drey große Tugenden, die mir fehlten, Ergebung in den Willen Gottes, Beharrlichkeit und Geduld zu erlernen“<sup>9</sup>. While Eichendorff did not enjoy his time at war, he came away from it with a greater devotion to God and his religion, which had a large impact on his romantic writing. After coming home, Eichendorff married Aloysia “Louise” von Larisch, the daughter of impoverished aristocrats. He obtained a certificate in civil service and worked for the Prussian government in various capacities until his retirement in 1844, all the while writing lyric poetry, short stories, and novels. Eichendorff died in 1857. He was buried next to his wife.

An important aspect of Eichendorff’s life that impacts his work is his religious devotion. Eichendorff was a devout Roman Catholic throughout his life<sup>10</sup>, which differs from many other prominent German Romantic writers who admired Catholic piety but did not necessarily practice the faith<sup>11</sup>. The intricacies of German Catholicism or German Romantic thought are beyond the scope of this thesis; however, there are a few concepts that directly impact Eichendorff’s work and are useful for comparison. A popular intellectual theory at the time came from the Jewish-Dutch philosopher Spinoza, who argued that God is merely nature, as opposed to God being the creator of nature<sup>12</sup>. This idea changes how the Romantic man interacts with nature. As opposed to acting as a point of contact with divinity, nature becomes divinity in and of itself. As a devout Catholic, Eichendorff’s stance was a little different. He held onto an orthodox view of God the Father, as opposed to God being the spiritual principal in the world or in nature. For Eichendorff, nature is a place to experience transcendence and interact with the

---

<sup>9</sup> Beck 339

<sup>10</sup> Beck 517-520

<sup>11</sup> Heuvel 158

<sup>12</sup> Nadler

divine, but Nature is not the divine itself. In his poetry, the human as the subject is not always able to access the divine, or if able to access it, the divine does not respond in expected ways. Much of Eichendorff's work explores this conflict. In his treatise on Romanticism, „Über die ethische und religiöse Bedeutung der neuen romantischen Poesie in Deutschland“, Eichendorff writes that, “True poetry is religious and makes poetry of religion”.<sup>13</sup> Eichendorff's romanticism accepts God as God, not God as nature, and this distinction strongly impacted his poetry.

Kobayashi Issa's upbringing was markedly different from Eichendorff's. Born Kobayashi Yataro, in a small farming family in modern-day Nagano in 1763, Kobayashi Issa lived and died in the Japan of *sakoku*, or closed-kingdom policy. Under that policy, no foreigner had access to Japan outside of a man-made island off the coast of Nagasaki<sup>14</sup>. Issa therefore never encountered romantic period art or literature, despite living during its prime.

His life was extremely difficult. After his mother died when he was three years old, he was brought up by first his grandmother and then his step-mother after his father remarried<sup>15</sup>. Although his haiku may exaggerate the circumstances a little, he had a difficult relationship with his stepmother, who he wrote despised him. After the death of his grandmother when he was fourteen, his family sent him to Edo (the site of the modern city of Tokyo) to find work<sup>16</sup>. Not much is known about his time there, although given

---

<sup>13</sup> Closs 228

<sup>14</sup> Ignoring the German adventurer Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold, who lived with a Japanese woman Kusumoto Taki (楠本滝) for 20 years, was banished from Japan 22 October 1829 by the Japanese for possessing a forbidden map. Siebold repaid the compliment by smuggling 2,000 living plant specimens to Java, including tea.

. See Japan in Transition

<sup>15</sup> Issanojidai 36

<sup>16</sup> Mackenzie 22

the social conditions of Japan at the time<sup>17</sup> we can assume that his unemployed time in Edo was rough. Issa himself wrote of the time period, saying:

人はいさ直な案山子もなかりけり

Immediately

people as well as scarecrows

lose their uprightness.

Despite his struggles, he eventually attended the Nirokuan Haiku School in Japan. It is around this time that he took his pen name, Issa -- literally one cup of tea -- by which he is best known by today. After his father died, he fought with his stepmother over his inheritance. A drawn-out legal battle resulted, which devalued his father's small estate. Issa took control of his inheritance and was able to marry. His first two children died in their infancy, as did his first wife. Issa was devoutly religious and became a Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist lay-priest. Although he was well-regarded as a poet, Issa died in poverty in 1827, after outliving both his second and his third wives<sup>18</sup>.

To discuss the full impact that Buddhist philosophical thought had on the art of Japanese haiku is outside of the scope of this thesis. However, there are a few tenants of the Buddhist sect that Issa himself practiced -- Jōdo Shinshū, Shin Buddhism, or Pure Land Buddhism, depending on the source -- that are useful in understanding the tensions underscoring his work and may be unfamiliar to a western audience<sup>19</sup>. For this reason it is important to examine the tenants Buddhism in general and of Jōdo Shinshū in particular.

---

<sup>17</sup> Dunn 51

<sup>18</sup> Ueda

<sup>19</sup> Ueda 87

The core doctrine that the Buddha declared and that are accepted by almost all forms of practicing Buddhists consists of the four Noble Truths. They are as follows. The first Noble Truth is the truth of suffering. It states that even when humans are not outright suffering from natural causes, such as grief or hunger, we are still unsatisfied or unfulfilled in this life and are therefore suffering. The second Noble Truth is that the root of this suffering is unholy desire, which is divided into three parts. The desire or greed for material or immaterial things, desire that occurs in ignorance or delusion, or desire to hate or commit violence against others. The third Noble Truth is the truth of the cessation of suffering. In order to achieve enlightenment, or a freedom from all suffering, we must estrange ourselves from the three causes of suffering: greed, delusion, or hate. The fourth Noble Truth is the truth of path to cessation of suffering. It delineates the way to achieve enlightenment through means of the eightfold path, which consists of eight teachings that the Buddha taught would help others achieve enlightenment<sup>20</sup>.

Buddhism, similar to Christianity, consists of many different sects. The four truths are accepted by almost all and present a very different world-view than that held in the west. The underlying expectation is that the world we live in is transitory. The suffering we feel is therefore also transitory, and enlightenment is achieved when we can let go of our desires. To do so, however, is considered nearly impossible.

This is where the sect of Buddhism that Issa practiced, Jōdo Shinshū, diverges from other sects of Buddhism. As opposed to many other sects, which emphasizes personal self-enlightenment through repeated suffering, Jōdo Shinshū introduces an element of grace. It is a uniquely Japanese sect of Buddhism. uniquely Japanese sect of

---

<sup>20</sup> Schmidt- Leukel

Buddhism. Stemming from the Mahayana Buddhism of India<sup>21</sup>, in modern times it is the second most common school of Buddhism in Japan, after the popular Nichiren School, and still exerts a considerable influence on Japanese culture and literature<sup>22</sup>. Issa himself became a lay monk in the sect. Jōdo Shinshū differs drastically from traditional Buddhist schools of thought, which emphasizes personal self-enlightenment. In contrast, the main tenant of Jōdo Shinshū is that its followers believe in Amida Buddha as eternal life, infinite light, and Savior of all beings<sup>23</sup>. Amida Buddha is *Oyasama*, a term that loosely translates to “Honored Parent”, connoting both fatherly and motherly characteristics in a single divine being. Amida Buddha does not reside in Heaven, however, as God does in the Christian tradition, nor is Amida Buddha a paternal figure in the Christian sense of God as the Heavenly Father.

Amida Buddha was once a man, a son of great kings. He felt such great empathy for his people that he experienced all the sufferings of others as if they were his own, which encouraged him to seek enlightenment. Upon achieving enlightenment, the environment around him changed as well, becoming the Pure Land. Those that arrive at the Pure Land can achieve enlightenment without struggle, and Amida Buddha wants all beings to arrive there and (in a Christian sense) be saved through grace. All those who devotedly believe in Amida Buddha will be reborn in the Pure Land. As opposed to the Christian idea of Heaven, which is entered after death, being born in the Pure Land can happen both in this life or after it. Once true devotion to the Amida Buddha is reached through pronouncing the name of Amida in sincerity and devotion, the world around the

---

<sup>21</sup> Suzuki 15

<sup>22</sup> Porcu 89

<sup>23</sup> Suzuki 18

believer is transformed into the Pure Land<sup>24</sup>. The sutras used in pronouncing the name of Amida reveal a key aspect of arriving at the Pure Land. As prominent Japanese author Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki explains, “Pure Land reveals itself when we realize what we [self-power] are, or rather what Amida is... When Amida and other-power are understood, Pure Land will inevitably become significant too. When Amida’s essential quality is comprehended, *hongan* and compassion, or love, will also accompany” (Suzuki 22-23). The central aim, then, of Jōdo Shinshū is to achieve sincere devotion to Amida Buddha, through which both one’s own power and the power of Amida are understood, and with them true love and compassion.

Superficially, the grace represented in Jōdo Shinshū, may appear to have more in common with Christianity than the traditional Buddhism of India or China, which is inner-directed. Similar to Christianity, Jōdo Shinshū relies on the faith of its adherents and the divine will or grace of Amida Buddha. It is important, however, to note that the details differ drastically from Christian thought. As with traditional Buddhism, understanding the self-power and the other-power is not seen as understanding the difference between God and Man, but as a shedding of consciousness of there being a subject and an object. Jōdo Shinshū adds to this concept with the inclusion of the Oyosama, who has already achieved this and desires to help others achieve it as well. Unlike the Catholicism of Eichendorff, nature and religion are not a way for the subject of man to interface with another divine subject. Instead, Jōdo Shinshū helps man realize that there are no differences between subject and subject, and therefore eschew and transcend the reconstructed world which we live in, which makes false divisions<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup> Suzuki 18-31

<sup>25</sup> Sasaki 8

Amida Buddha is then both the divine-subject and the self-subject, and birth into the Pure Land occurs when the false delineation falls away and the disciple finds both. As such, this life – or the life before being born into the Pure Land – is ephemeral, constrained by the ideas of self and object and time. It is ‘dew drops on the morning grass’, as Issa would say.

Issa’s place as a lay priest in Jōdo Shinshū leads to a slightly different analysis of his poetry than that of a traditional Zen Buddhist reading used commonly in analysis of Japanese haiku<sup>26</sup>. Zen understandings, such as an understanding of the world as is, are still present in Issa’s work<sup>27</sup>. However, Issa’s haiku differs from his predecessors in that it reflects both a humor and acceptance of life and a pained acknowledgement of how fleeting and transient it is<sup>28</sup>. There is a sense of divine grace and acceptance throughout Issa’s poetry

This departure from tradition explains, in part, the singular status that Issa occupies within the pantheon of the four great masters of haiku: Basho, Buson, Shiki, and Issa. Issa is considered an extremely unorthodox haikai poet, in part due to his use of colloquial language and his focus on daily life<sup>29</sup>. Basho, whose work is the standard by which all haiku are judged<sup>30</sup>, adhered strongly to the tenants of Zen Buddhism<sup>31</sup>, which necessitates a complete subjugation of self into surrounding, letting go of the self as subject<sup>32</sup>. Basho’s poetry is known for its reflections on nature and time, and its

---

<sup>26</sup> Blythe 58

<sup>27</sup> Issa’s poetry does, however, branch away from a rigorously Confucian world view. For more information see Kato.

<sup>28</sup> Kato 208

<sup>29</sup> Shirane 413 (Cambridge)

<sup>30</sup> Blythe iii

<sup>31</sup> Kerkham

<sup>32</sup> Addis 176

avoidance of a human subject<sup>33</sup>. Buson and Shiki were both his disciples, and although their poetry is varied, they also tended to do the same. Issa did not. His poetry is notable for its deep humanity and empathy for the human condition, as well as the condition of humanity's fellow creatures on this planet<sup>34</sup>. Despite being a lay monk for Jōdo Shinshū, his work acknowledged the pain, sufferings, fallability, and imperfections of humans in a deeply personal way, as shown by his haiku, “All the time I pray to Buddha, I keep on killing mosquitos”.

### **Formal and Linguistic Aspects of the Poems**

Eichendorff's poetry is extremely beautiful in its original German, and is known today for its transcendental longing. Eichendorff lived and wrote during what is known as the late romantic-period in Germany. He is best known today for his lyric poetry. Many of his poems which are the focus of analysis in this thesis were set to music.

When analyzing the lyric poetry of Eichendorff, there are several formal and linguistical aspects that are important in analysis. First and foremost form of a lyric poem. Lyric poetry of the Romantic period generally describes moods and emotion in connection with natural scenes, as opposed to narrative ones<sup>35</sup>. Poems can vary in length, but they are constrained by form. Romantic lyric poetry tends to focus on nature and uses nature both to express the sorrows of the human subject and to explore the unpredictable nature of the Divine. Linguistically, German is perhaps unique in its ability to convey meaning and emotion. Word order in German is extremely flexible, as long as certain

---

<sup>33</sup> Addis 124

<sup>34</sup> Mackenzie 7

<sup>35</sup> Welleck

grammatical rules are followed, allowing the poet to place special emphasis on certain words within a line. The German language also allows for combining of words in unique ways to form new words that carry different connotations than those that make them up.

When analyzing Issa's poetry, there are a few formal and linguistic aspects that play key roles and should be considered. The most important of these is the haiku structure, which is rigorously structured and easily turned farcical in translation to English. The standard haiku has verses of 5-7-5 syllables, or, when written in Japanese, are 17 syllables long, with cutting syllables, or *keriji*, used to separate the verses<sup>36</sup>. Haiku may stand alone or be linked to other haiku by written lines of prose. A key characteristic of haiku is their relationship with and referencing of the seasons. This is known as *kigo*. *Kigo* to a coded reference system that may seem foreign to those not in the know. For instance, the mention of a frog sets the scene in spring, while maiden silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) almost always means fall. Finally, similar to western poetry, consonance and assonance play an important role. Repeated sounds are often onomatopoeic, referencing the sounds that one might here while the action or scene in the haiku appears. Linguistically, haiku relies on a few traits that of the Japanese language, that English and German lack. Perhaps the most important difference is the absence of verb inflections. Except for a few instances<sup>37</sup>, verbs in Japanese do not inflect based on gender or number. Instead, verbs inflect on four tenses: present positive, present negative, past positive, and past negative. This, in conjunction with the common practice of either implying or entirely dropping the subject of a sentence, can introduce a large amount of

---

<sup>36</sup> Addiss 8

<sup>37</sup> Base II with the ending *mashō*, or Base V can have the meaning of let us (as in a group) verb. However there is no past tense conjugation of these forms, and indeed many other bases and endings can mean both group or individual action, depending on context. See *Japanese in Review*.

ambiguity. This is common in regular speech, where the subject of a sentence can usually be inferred. In haiku the subject is almost ever-present. It is used both to cut down on syllable length, and to introduce a measure of uncertainty in the haiku, blurring the lines between the subject reading the poem and the subject described in it. For instance, consider the following haiku by Issa: 何のその百万万石も、笹の露. Hamill translates it as, “What’s the lord’s vast wealth/to me, his millions and more?/Dew on trembling grass. However there is no verb or main subject in the original Japanese. It could be Issa reflecting to himself. It could also be him telling the reader(s), what is it to you or them. Or it could simply be asking what it is in a general sense.

In addition to the ambiguity these features introduce, the usage of kanji, or written Japanese characters, adds another layer of depth to Haiku. As we will see in the analysis section, Kanji carry much more connotation than the phonetic English alphabet. Kanji-choice is often used by the author to convey another layer of meaning into the haiku, beyond how the poem may read at first glance.

### **Poetry Analysis**

As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, the major stylistic divides between the poets can be explored in how they view nature. Eichendorff tends to view Nature as a conduit for communication from a divine other, in turn both inspiring and disturbing. In contrast, Issa views nature not as a unified entity, but as collection of individuals who are in and of themselves subjects equal to Issa himself, with their own cares and worries. Given these differences, the types of grief that the poets describe in their work tend to differ

substantially. Eichendorff commonly feels an unease in Nature, almost a feeling as if he were interloping in a place he should not be. This is highlighted in his poem *Der Abend*.

Der Abend

Schweigt der Menschen laute Lust:

Rauscht die Erde wie in Träumen

Wunderbar mit allen Bäumen,

Was dem Herzen kaum bewußt,

Alte Zeiten, linde Trauer,

Und es schweifen leise Schauer

Wetterleuchtend durch die Brust.

The Evening

The men silence their loud desires

Whispers the earth like in a dream

Wonderful with all its trees

Things the heart barely is aware of

Ancient times, gentle sadness

And it shoots quiet shudders, wandering

Like sheet-lightning through the breast.

Der Abend is an intense exploration of the moment, when the bustle of the day turns to contemplation as the poet encounters the divine in nature. However, the experience as described by Eichendorff is not one of solace but of uneasiness. The first three lines belie this undercurrent of suffering. “Schweigt der Menschen laute Lust:/

Rauscht die Erde wie in Träumen/ Wunderbar mit allen Bäumen” describes the dream-like quality of nature once the loudness of the unnatural (man) falls silent. The word order in the first line is again inverted. The focus is not on the men that are quieting, but on the encroaching silence itself, as shown through its impact on the men. The use of the word *rauschen*, which describes rustling, suggests the world itself is coming awake and wondering joyfully at its own trees as one might imagine in a dream. The subject of these lines is the earth itself, and nature in that sense is at peace, rustling with awareness. The human element is uneasily silenced from outward expression, and is therefore separate from what the earth experiences. The following lines consider the contrast the peace of the earth with the feelings of the poet when confronted with it: “Was dem Herzen kaum bewußt/ Alte Zeiten, linde Trauer”. Despite the potential beauty of the evening, anxious feelings come to the surface: ancient times and gentle sorrows. As nature comes alive in the absence of man, man becomes aware of feelings and memories that he scarcely knew were there. The conclusion of the poem explains the result of such Trauer: “Und es schweifen leise Schauer/ Wetterleuchtend durch die Brust”. *Schweifen* provides similar alliteration and consonance with the opening verb “*schweigt*”, linking the act of going silent with the wandering uneasiness that follows. The shudders that course through the poet’s chest are described as *Wetterleuchtend*, or sheet-lightning like. Sheet-lightning occurs when lightning’s brightness is diffused through clouds, creating a softer but more encompassing glow. It also often occurs with a lack of thunder. Although a natural phenomenon, it appears in many ways to be unnatural. Likewise, the memories of things that the heart itself has forgotten heightens the unease in the poet, but the uneasiness itself is hidden and hard to understand. It may be softer (*wetterleuchtend*) than a sudden jolt of

fear or pain, but is all the more unnerving for its softness. It is both melancholic and wonderful at the same time. Eichendorff experiences the divine in nature, an experience that should be joyous, but unable to connect with it, his experiences are instead unsettling and almost disturbing.

This is an experience in nature that Issa did not express in his poetry. If he felt disoriented in shizen, he did not mention it. This may stem in part from his understanding of nature as being a collection of other subjects, all of which have their own lives separate from himself. That is to say, unlike Eichendorff, Issa did not go to shizen with the understanding that something other than nature's parts may appear. Eichendorff did not always experience the divine in nature, but the tension created by both the presence or the absence of the divine is ever-present. In contrast, even occasions in shizen that are almost unnatural fail to draw an uneasy reaction from Issa, as shown by the following three haiku written after viewing a total eclipse of the moon.

瑞1数は月より先へ欠にけり

*hito kazu wa tsuki yori saki e kake ni keru*

The nature of man:

The moon gazers vanish

More quickly than the moon

人の世は月もなやませたまいきり

*hito no yo wa tsuki mo nayamase tamai keru*

In the world of man

Even this moon must endure

It's suffering

僭上に月の欠るを目利哉

*senjô ni tsuki no kakeru wo mekiki kana*

Pretending wisdom

A man tells a woman all

About the eclipse

Instead of being unsettled by a disappearing moon, Issa instead focused on the humor of the situation, using the occasion to reflect on the character of those viewing the eclipse. This contrasts with Eichendorff, who uses unnatural phenomena – such as sheet lighting – to describe the alienation he feels at times in nature. Instead of focusing on the moon as being impermanent or unsettling due to its changes, it is the people watching the moon and their foibles that Issa finds interesting in the first and third Haiku. While the second haiku is a little more serious, Issa's own metaphysical beliefs about shizen are shown to have a profound impact on his poetry. The eclipse is viewed in a way that contextualizes Issa's own experiences in the world. Like the moon, the ephemeral world the poet lives in must have dark periods. There is no divine other than that which appears through the rare event of the eclipse. The natural phenomena brings no metaphysical

grief. Instead, it is used to describe how this life – and the poets own experiences- are fleeting.

While Issa’s haiku do not describe metaphysical grief, they contain themes of a very human grief that comes from losing loved ones. Consider the following collection of haiku by Issa.

Midsummer, visiting my daughters grave seventeen days after her death:

一念仏申す程してすすき哉

*hito nebutsu mô[su] hodo shite susuki kana*

offering a prayer

In soft maiden grass

I sit a long time

Before saying my prayer<sup>38</sup>

啄木もやめて聞かよ夕木魚

*kitsutsuki mo yamete kiku ka yo yû mokugyo*

The woodpecker

Also stops and listens

The evening drum

啄木の目利して見る庵哉

---

<sup>38</sup> Cite Japanese

*kitsutsuki no mekiki shite miru iori kana*

The old woodpecker assays

So studiously

My hermitage

Issa's triad of haikus written 17 days after his daughter's death does not, on first glance, have much to do with the human grief and pain of such a tragedy. As opposed to considering shizen as an object from which Issa himself seeks understanding or connection, he observed shizen as a world of beings similar to himself. Issa's personal thoughts and feelings are unclear in the tryptic. His grief is a starting point, that causes him to seek nature, not a metaphysical grief caused by his interactions with shizen. In the above haiku, this is illustrated through the woodpecker, which does not symbolize grief and yet still interacts with Issa. Although Issa's own grief is outwardly absent, the passing of time is clearly conveyed through the progression of the poems, and the three poems work together to imply the depth of pain and suffering he is experiencing. Consider the first haiku in the trio.

Although the first line of the haiku suggests a focus on shizen,, the subject is clearly the poet as he considers his daughters grave. In fact, at first read the reference to maiden grass contrasts jarringly with the rest of the poem. Japanese silver maiden grass (薄) is a poetic symbol for autumn, similar to the use of a cherry blossom to symbolize spring. In addition to its use in thatching roof, silver maiden grass is also considered to be one of the most beautiful sights of autumn in Japan. To be sitting in soft silver maiden grass invokes the joys and beauties of the fall season. This contrasts directly with what

the poet informs us of his setting in the previous prose: that is, he is sitting at his daughters grave a little over two weeks after her death, in midsummer. The silver maiden grass imply a rushing by of the seasons, or an early ending to the season of summer. The poet sits in grass that has flowered too soon and will die too early, attempting to pray for his daughter's death. While Issa doesn't directly discuss this grief, it is apparent in the following lines: I sit a long time/before saying my prayer. The prayer Issa uttered, as a priest in the Jōdo Shinshū sect of Buddhism, would be in large part a prayer of letting go of his deceased daughter<sup>39</sup>. That is, a prayer to express hope that she has reached the Pure Land, but also a prayer acknowledging the ephemerality of life and attempting to transcend its miseries. In an entry about another death of an unrelated child in *Spring of My Life*, Issa examined the difficulties the parents face. "...his parents ran out to see his body, their bitter tears observed by everyone. True, as followers of the Way, they had always preached transcendence of this life's miseries, but who could act otherwise? Their all-too-human hearts were shattered..."<sup>40</sup>. Issa, it seems, experienced something similar to those parents when he went to pray at his daughter's grave. Although a firm believer in the Pure Land, he was unable to let go of his daughter in her death, and thus unable to pray right away. If the maiden grass flowered early, Issa himself is figuratively late, unable to achieve enough equanimity to begin praying. The image of the early autumn combined with the deep sense of solitude invoked by the poet's actions combine in this to form a devastating impression of a grieving father, unable to let go.

The second haiku in the trio steps away from this poignant image of grief. In this poem three different beings come together, the poet and the woodpecker, and the evening

---

<sup>39</sup> Stone, Tanabe 325 - 348

<sup>40</sup> Hamill 9

drum. The evening drum here refers to a nearby shrine's drum; presumably a Buddhist one, given Issa's place at his daughter's grave. In Buddhism, the great taiko drums used at shrines are holy instruments, believed to carry the voice of Buddha to the faithful<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, the evening drum here references another being, a holy one, communicating with the woodpecker and the poet. It is important to note that the poet is not directly mentioned in this poem. Instead, the use of the Japanese particle "*mo*" implies that the woodpecker is not alone in stopping to listen. This adds to the sense that something holy occurs, as the poet physically removes himself from the haiku, perhaps achieving the transcendence of this life and unity with shizen he was unable to achieve in the first haiku. However, the motivations of both the poet and of the woodpecker and what they glean from the presence of the divine subject are opaque. While the gravitas of the presence of the divine is shown through how everyone stops to listen, the specifics are left up to the reader. The impact that this has on the poet is shown in part by the next haiku.

While we are unaware of what internal impact the evening drum exerted on the poet and the woodpecker in the second haiku, the third and final haiku in the trio shows the external impact: united by the evening drum, the poet and the woodpecker travel together to the poet's home. While in the second haiku both are linked by the use of the particle "*mo*", in this haiku a divide is shown between them by the use of the ending "*kanna*", which shows that the speaker is wondering. Separated from the evening drum – further away from the pure land – Issa is unable to completely discern the woodpecker's actions. He thinks that the woodpecker is judging his home, but he may be wrong. The

---

<sup>41</sup> New World Encyclopedia

unity felt by his daughter's graveside is no longer there, and he and the woodpecker are once again divided. However, even within this divide they are still fellow travelers, as shown by the woodpecker's choice to follow the poet home.

One really interesting aspect of this triad of haiku comes from how the passage of time is portrayed. In the first, the usage of maiden grass implies an early-ending midsummer, while the poet is shown to sit 'for a long while' as he contemplates the grave. In the second haiku, the evening drum shows the passing of time; what happened in the interim is unknown, but as night falls the poet is still at the grave, within sound of the shrine's evening drum. In the final haiku, the poet is shown to have finally returned home. Perhaps united by hearing the evening drum previously, the woodpecker accompanies him home, giving him comfort of some sort. Although Issa refers to his home as a hermitage, he is no longer alone there; the woodpecker has joined him and is considering his home. The overall tone of the final poem is hopeful. The poet went to the grave and suffered silently in the first; heard the voice of the divine in the second, and returns home with a companion in the third, no longer alone. He sought companionship and understanding of his grief in his interactions with another subject in shizen, and through these interactions found solace.

Although Eichendorff did not seek solace from nature through contextualizing his own experiences, through the presence of the divine in nature he did at times receive comfort, as previously shown. Although differing in context from Issa's poetry about his daughters death, Eichendorff describes this in his poem, *Wehmut*.

Wehmut (from Toten Opfer)

Ich irr im Tal und Hainen

Ein kühler Abendstund,

Ach, weinen möcht ich, weinen

So recht aus Herzensgrund.

Und alter Zeiten Grüßen

Kam da, im Tal erwacht,

Gleichwie von fernen Flüssen

Das Rauschen durch die Nacht.

Die Sonne ging hinunter,

Da säuselt' kaum die Welt,

Ich blieb noch lange munter

Allein im stillen Feld.

Melancholy

I wander in valleys and groves

A cool evening hour

Oh I wish I could cry, cry

Honestly from the depths of my heart

Greeting from ancient times  
Came there, awoken in the valley  
As if from far-flung rivers  
The rustling through the night

The sun went down  
There's barely a whisper in the world  
I stay still longer, cheerfully  
Alone in the quiet field

In this poem we don't quite know why Eichendorff wishes to cry "from the depths of his heart". However, we do know that despite the beauty of the valley and grove, the poet suffered from his very foundations, shown by his desire to weep that stems from his heart.

The first stanza sets the emotion of the poet. *Irren* in German has two potential meanings: either to wander in a lost or erratic way, as Eichendorff means in this context, or to be mistaken, when used with a reflexive pronoun. The poet is not wandering happily throughout the valleys and groves, despite the cool evening. No, he seems immersed by his grief and melancholy. Despite this, the poem doesn't go straight into his grief. The subject of the sentence, "Ich" makes it clear that the focus of the poem is on the poet. However, the first two lines are incredibly impersonal despite this. The valleys and meadows, the cool evening – all are fairly neutral descriptions of nature, neither lending themselves to expressions of grief or to effusions of joy. The final two lines of the stanza take the focus away from the subject wandering throughout nature and instead places it

on the emotions of the subject, which seem almost alien to this scene. The emphasis is on *weinen*, on crying from the depth of his heart. The combination of vague scenes from nature (a valley, a meadow) combined with this intense emotion shows a subject barely cognizant of the world around him as he suffers his grief. The wandering is vague because the poet's cognizance of his location is also vague, consumed as he is by that terrible grief.

The second stanza steps away from the grief described in the first to describe the nature around him and instead focuses on the valley and meadow that the poet is in. However, as opposed to Issa whose focus on *shizen* is narrowed to brief and unrelated snapshots, Eichendorff's description of the valley introduces a divine actor, who communicates through powerful natural phenomenon such as a rushing river. While the poet is observing nature in his grief, the valley around him begins to wake up. Ancient greetings come to him. Nature no longer is simply nature; instead it is a place of transcendence and communication with the divine. The greetings that come to the poet are similar the sound of a distant river heard during night-time, but are not actually the river. There are two subjects in this stanza: the poet who experiences nature, and the divine which communicates through nature. Differing from Issa, who views nature as a collection of separate but equally important beings, Eichendorff views nature as a conduit for divinity to engage the human soul. The third stanza considers what impact this has on the poet.

The initial focus in the final stanza remains on nature. As opposed to the second stanza, which describes the *rauschen* of the nights as ancient whispers, nature is simply nature again. The sun sets, the whispers cease. The poet is calmed from his earlier

emotional pain. He no longer wanders, but instead stays cheerfully alone in a quiet field. The choice of the word *munter* is interesting here. It literally translates to lively, jolly, or spirited, which contrasts with the verb *bleiben*, meaning to stand still. The motion present in the first stanza, *irren*, or a restless wandering, pairs better with the lively than that of staying still. Eichendorff switches the emotions and actions. Feeling great melancholy, the poet wanders, while feeling chipper, he stays still. The reader is left unaware of what the whisperings through nature in the second stanza actually said, but we can see their effect on the poet himself, both in the meaning and usage of longer vowels. While the divine is absent as a subject in the third stanza of the poem, something about its previous presence allows the poet to feel cheerful as he sits alone, in the dark and quiet field.

In *Wehmut* Eichendorff inverts the expectations we may have of a poem about nature. The poet's melancholy runs as an undercurrent throughout the descriptions of the day but are resolved in the night. Although daytime in a valley is expected to be a joyous occasion, the *Zeiten Grüßen* that flow through it are understood to be painful. They linger almost as the sounds of a distant or ancient river. However, as the sun sets and the world becomes quiet, the poet stays alone in the field with feelings of joy. The presence of the divine in nature allows the poet to feel the full range of his emotions, from melancholy, to wondering, to a final peace. Nature, the cause of his metaphysical grief, is also the cause of his relief.

Eichendorff's poetry further considers the interplay between the poet and an almost inherent suffering that all poets must go through in his poem *Dichterlos*.

Dichterlos

Für alle muß vor Freuden

Mein treues Herze glühn,

Für alle muß ich leiden,

Für alle muß ich blühn,

Und wenn die Blüten Früchte haben,

Da haben sie mich längst begraben

A Poet's Fate

For all must my faithful heart

Glow with joy

For all must I suffer

For all must I flower

And when the blossoms have their fruits,

They will have buried me long since.

Although nature as a distinct subject is absent in this poem, it is present in the imagery that Eichendorff uses, as well as the metaphysical grief that he describes.

*Dichterlos*, or 'a poet's fate', explores the burden of experience that a poet lives. It evokes the breadth and depth that a poetic soul must endure due to its connection with nature, and implies that, after all of this feeling, the poet himself must die under the weight of it. The paramount importance of emotion is shown in part by Eichendorff's inversion of the usual German word order. The first line, *Für alle muß vor Freuden*, is a fragment,

completely lacking a subject. More so than the poet himself, finding joy in everything becomes a sort of pseudo-poet. The next line, *Mein treues Herz glüht*, finishes the sentence, but retains the removal of the poet as an acting subject. It is not the poet himself that must feel intense joy for everything, but his faithful heart, implying a degree of inevitability to do otherwise. The inverted word order continues throughout the poem. It is not “*ich muß für alle leiden*”, but ‘*Für alle muß ich leiden*’. Likewise, it is not „*ich muß für alle blühen*“, but „*Für alle muß ich blühen*“. This construction continues to draw attention to the „*Für alle*”, or the everything experienced, as opposed to the person experiencing it. By not giving any details of what are contained in the “*alle*”, Eichendorff conveys the overwhelming and all-encompassing joy and suffering that are a poet's lot, in part due to their connection with and simultaneous separation from nature. The final two lines of the poem conclude that after experiencing such emotional highs and lows, the fate of a poet is an early death. They are addressed to the reader of the poem, and perhaps to communicate with a non-poetic soul, and are more detailed than the poet's description of his personal experience. In addition to suggesting an early death. “*Und Wenn die Blüten Früchte haben/Da haben sie mich längst begraben*” also suggests that the poet himself will never see the fruits of his labors. The use of “*und*” links the preceding line’s “*Für alle muß ich blühen*” with the “*Blüten*” that will never bear fruit. The poet is a being that must rejoice and weep and open himself to the everything around him, but his descriptions of such an experience are only of worth after he himself is gone.

In both of the above poems, Eichendorff describes in part his own experience as a poet. He relates to nature as a place to both experience the full range of his emotions and to seek acknowledgement (however fraught) from a holier being. He further describes the

impact of his emotions using nature imagery. He blooms for everyone, but in part because of the strength of his emotions, he is unable to see the fruit created in others by his actions. He is separate from the divine in nature, and yet as a poet he is the most able to help others also experience the divine. nature, which causes his metaphysical grief, since it is the only medium through which the poet can express his experience.

Issa's work does not dwell very often on what it means to be a haiku poet that interacts with shizen. He does however, reflect a little on his place in his own work, as shown by the following Haiku.

春立や弥太郎改め一茶坊

*haru tatsuya yatarô aratame issa-bô*

Spring rises

Yatoro is reborn

The monk Issa

秋の風一茶心に思ふやう

*aki no kaze issa kokoro ni omou fuyau*

The autumn wind

In Issa's heart

Consideration

Issa's own metaphysical beliefs about shizen are apparent in both of the above haiku. Here he relates to nature as a way to relate to his own experience. The first Haiku

references Issa's abandoning of his birth name, Yataro, and his taking of the moniker Issa, which has the literal meaning of one cup of tea. Similar to Eichendorff's reference to himself as flowering, a natural phenomenon which takes place usually in spring, Issa links his own transformation to the springtime. In this haiku, Issa chose some interesting Kanji usage that conveys meaning other than how the words sound. The first line, 春立や, or *haru tatsuya* if spoken out loud, is a homonym of the phrase 春経つや, which translates to spring passes by, connoting temporal change because of the verb 経つ. 立, which Issa uses instead of 経, literally means erect, rise or stand up, and is commonly used in political words, such as 連立 (alliance), 国立 (national), and 独立 (independence). Issa's usage of the kanji portrays spring as something erect, strong, and lasting, not something fleeting or passing by. Spring here has a presence. Issa uses the word 改め to describe his own personal change. 改め, or *aratame*, is commonly used as a suffix to describe something as former, or previous. Furthermore, the verb 改める denotes renewal, reformation, change, or alteration. It forms the basis of the verb 悔い改める, or repentance in English. Issa in this poem is not simply discussing a name change, but a complete change in personality. Issa is no longer the Yataro, but has been reborn, in a way, to the monk Issa, in a similar way as to how spring arises out of winter. The arrival of a new season mirrors his own changes.

The second haiku referenced here is a rare example of how shizen affects the poet from Issa's point of view. If Eichendorff's *Dichterlos* describes being a poet as a live wire attuned to the whims of Nature, always feeling every emotion, then Issa's description here tends more towards that of something still and deep. Although both Issa and Eichendorff turn to the seasons to describe their experiences as poets, poetry comes in a different season for Issa. The poet's fate, according to Eichendorff, is to be overcome long before autumn, the season where flowers turn to fruit. In contrast, Issa's heart and mind are stirred in autumn. 心, used in the second line and usually translated as heart, means mind, heart, and spirit in Japanese. In German the closest word would be *das Gemüt*. Something about the autumn wind touches Issa right to the core of his being. The word which I translate as consideration, 思ふやう, also has a greater meaning in the original Japanese. 思 can mean to think, to consider, to believe, to wish, and to hope, depending on the context. Since context is lacking here, the haiku conveys all of this. Issa's heart, touched by the autumn wind, reacts strongly, almost overwhelmingly.

This is similar to Eichendorff's assertion that the poet must feel everything. Their interpretations of being a poet differ, however, in their verb usage. 思 is an inherently internal reaction, something that may show up through glimpses on face, but not much else. In contrast, the verbs that Eichendorff uses – *freuden, glühn, leiden, blühn* (literally "to rejoice, to glow, to suffer, to bloom" all describe reactions that are usually external, visible to all. Both poets are deeply affected by their experiences, but only in Eichendorff could this reaction be observed by others. This may come in part from their differing metaphysical beliefs. Eichendorff experiences an inherent friction in nature,

which heightens his emotions until he can almost do nothing but feel. In contrast Issa achieves understanding of the ephemeral reality of his emotions in shizen, allowing him to de-intensify them.

This de-escalation and familiarity it leads to are shown in part through his focus on the small things of nature, as seen in the following haiku.

筍や

ともども育つ

雀の子

*takenoko ya/ tomo-domo sodatsu/ suzume no ko*

Bamboo shoots

Nurtured together with

The sparrow's children

This poem considers young plant and animal life and their relationship with each other. However, considering Issa's own upbringing and writings that describe desperate loneliness and abuse<sup>42</sup>, the distance from which Issa is able to write about childhood shows the underlying metaphysical importance of such a topic. Through describing nature, the poet emphasizes the ephemeral nature of childhood. Both the bamboo and the sparrow grow; but they do it together, almost as friends would. Issa here plays around with the Japanese word for bamboo and the suffix of 子(ko). The word for bamboo

---

<sup>42</sup> Hamill 45-48

shoots in Japanese is 筍<sup>43</sup>, pronounced *takenoko*. However, the phrase 雀の子, (*noko*) literally means child of sparrow, or sparrows's child. The first and last line then mimic each other in sound, if not in kana usage. The first line, 筍や, then has the same implications as the last line, 雀の子. That is, the translation of 雀の子 is not baby sparrows, but sparrow's children, implying a familial relationship. Similarly, although 筍 is lacking the Japanese kana for child, 子, the idea of there being parent bamboo somewhere is similarly implied. The verb used in the middle line similarly implies that the shoots and sparrows are being raised. 育つ(*sodatsu*) is an intransitive verb meaning to be raised or to be nurtured. The sparrows, then, are not the only subjects in the poem. The bamboo doesn't act as the backdrop against which the sparrows grow up, but as a fellow subject. This togetherness is emphasized by the middle line, ともども育つ. ともども, when used between two nouns, means together with an emphasis to a shared experience<sup>44</sup>. Similar to the more colloquial 一緒に, a more informative translation may be "along with", or "sharing in". Its usage here makes it clear that the bamboo shoots themselves are being raised and nurtured. This connotation then highlights that the sparrows and the bamboo shoots are distinct subjects. That is to say, bamboo and sparrows are nurtured very differently. For one, to grow up is taken literally. Bamboo shoots grow taller at exponential rates. For the other, to grow up implies learning skills: how to find food, fly, and make a nest. The plant life and animal life are disparate, but they are united in that they are something that receives that disparate nurturing together.

---

<sup>43</sup> It must be noted that the kana used by Issa here is considered outdated today, instead the more literal 竹の子, or child of the bamboo, is used.

<sup>44</sup> Makino.

An argument could be made that Issa here is merely anthropomorphizing the bamboo shoots and the baby sparrows, treating them as objects onto which he projects and understands the human experience of growing up. However, such a reading disregards the different needs of a sparrow, bamboo shoot, and human baby. Issa is not trying to understand the human experience of being nurtured through observing the sparrows as shoots being nurtured. He is instead observing and describing the nurturing experience of two distinct and separate subjects. There is no tension in his description of these two separate beings. For Issa, *shizen* is simply a collection of beings. This causes the unease that Eichendorff experiences in nature, caused by the distinct presence or complete absence of the divine, to be completely absent.

Although this underlying tension clearly separates Eichendorff and Issa's poetry from one another, Eichendorff does turn to nature for understanding of his human grief. The result, however, is often a greater metaphysical grief. Consider the poem *Vom Berge* by Eichendorff, written about a dead loved one, with the haiku popularly known as *A Dewdrop World* by Issa, written after the death of his daughter.

Vom Berge  
Da unten wohnte sonst mein Lieb,  
  
Die ist jetzt schon begraben,  
  
Der Baum noch vor der Türe blieb,  
  
Wo wir gesessen haben.  
  
  
Stets muß ich nach dem Hause sehn,  
  
Und seh doch nichts vor Weinen,

Und wollt ich auch hinunter gehn,  
Ich stürb dort so alleine!

Under there lives my love  
She is now long buried  
The tree still before the door stands  
Where we once sat

I must always look on the house  
And see nothing because of tears  
And wish that I too below could go  
I'll have died there so alone

*Vom Berge*, or from the mountains, is written from the perspective of a man whose love has died – a grief that mirrors Issa's. It is clearly separated into two stanzas. The first is almost completely emotionless, while the second is overflowing with emotion. Oddly enough, a mountain is not referred (indirectly or otherwise) in either. The first stanza is impersonal. As is common in Eichendorff's poetry, the subject is inverted. The focus is not on *mein Lieb* (my love), but on the nature surrounding her grave. In the second line she is further removed by the use of the feminine article *die*, as opposed to the pronoun *sie*. We are told that the poet's love lies underneath and has already been buried, but not any of the emotions that the poet feels about this. Likewise, the third line of the stanza focuses on the tree that has stayed/endured outside of their home. It is only

in the fourth line of the poem that a personal reference occurs: *Wo wir gesessen haben* (where *we* once sat) neither inverts or uses an impersonal subject, injecting the hitherto sterile scene with a personal feeling. Despite this foreshadowing, both the emotion and the language of the next stanza is jarring. The consonants of *Stets* contrasts sharply with the preceding language. The unspecified location of the first stanza becomes *dem Haus*. The austerity gives way to overwrought emotion. This break from the unaffected suggests a deep grief and suffering that one attempts to hide through other means – perhaps describing the scene rather than the feeling. The subject in the second stanza is not inverted at all, causing the focus to switch from nature to the poet. The suffering is intensely personal, despite or perhaps in spite of the neutrality with which the poet describes the setting in the first stanza. The repeated usages of “*Und*” at the beginning of lines 6 and 7 links the neutrality of the first stanza with the traumatic pain that the poet feels; while the images described may seem impersonal at first, for the poet seeing them they prevent sight due to the tears and make him want to join his love below the ground. In combination with the previously set scene, *Und* (and) also viscerally invokes the image of someone wildly sobbing and trying to explain why. The final line continues to invoke deep grief with its wild declaration *Ich stirb dort so alleine!* (I die there so alone).

In the context of the intense suffering of the poet, the title *Vom Berge* at first appears incongruent with the overall poem, especially given that *Berge*, or mountains, are conspicuously absent from the poem. It seems to suggest that just considering a mountain causes this scene of grief to play out. This in turn suggests that, instead of offering comfort or understanding of grief, going to nature intensifies it. Whatever equanimity the poet processed in the first stanza gives way to deep depression and a conviction of their

own solitude. Nature is present in the first stanza, and in the title, but the divine does not communicate through it. It is almost as if it is indifferent to the poet's sufferings.

Although rare, Issa also experiences great suffering that his experience in shizen is not entirely able to resolve. Despite his attempt to find understanding of the ephemeral world, it is sometimes impossible. When he is overwrought with emotion, as Eichendorff is in *Vom Berge*, he is not overcome with tears. Instead, he considers the dew.

露の世は露の世ながらさりながら

*Tsuyu no yo wa tsuyu no wa nagara sarinagara*

The dew of the night

Disappears

Drop by drop<sup>45</sup>

Or, a literal translation which conveys less meaning:

This dewdrop world

Is a dewdrop world

And yet, and yet.

Issa wrote the above haiku the night of his two-year old daughter's death. This poem shows his metaphysical belief in a temporary world collide painfully with his substantial and human grief. The poet accepts that the dew of the night must disappear – it is in its very nature – but cannot help but note each drop. Similar to his poem

---

<sup>45</sup> Translation done by Kishimoto Masayuki

considering the autumn wind, Issa's reaction here is entirely internal. Unlike Eichendorff's reaction to grief, there is no mention of weeping or tears obscuring his vision. Issa's reaction is calm, and still, considering the small natural phenomenon of dew, which appears during the night only to disappear during the daytime. This links in part back to his unique sect of Buddhism. Issa, as a priest in Jodo Shinshu, believed that this world is ephemeral, with meaning only to be found in how things will be once the pure land is reached. The phrase 露の世, or *tsuyu no yo* meaning dewdrop world translates fairly directly. It is the final lines, ながらさりながら, which are the most troublesome to translate. The first component, ながら or *nagara*, is commonly used with verbs to convey the preceding action takes place while performing the verb. It can also mean "although". さりながら is used much less commonly, translates roughly to nevertheless, and conveys a sense of longing or pain. Together, they express a deep melancholy in a transitory world. Issa's metaphysical belief in this world as ephemeral, with shizen as a companion but not a conduit, remain firm. However he cannot help but grieve for his dead daughter all the same.

### **Conclusion**

While both poets focus on nature as way to interact with grief, the metaphysical differences between Eichendorff's and Issa's beliefs cause not only very different expressions of that grief, but also differing kinds of grief. While Eichendorff views Nature as almost mercurial, able to change from mere natural phenomena to a conduit for the divine or occasionally even the demonic, Issa views nature as a collection of fellow beings that travel the same path towards enlightenment as himself. Eichendorff's

experiences in Nature always contain the tension of another presence that is throughout Nature as a whole, either fully present or conspicuous and unsettling in its absence. This causes him to feel a metaphysical grief. Although this grief can be exacerbated or assuaged through interactions with Nature, it is almost ever-present, even in joyful experiences. Contrastingly, Issa's poetry observes and considers the individual elements of nature in order to achieve understanding of the ephemerality of his own grief. He receives companionship from his fellow beings in nature and the ability to accept and distance himself from his grief. If for Eichendorff, grief is the outcome of an encounter with Nature, grief for Issa is a precondition. Both poet's works link nature (or Nature) to their griefs, but the character of that link differs profoundly due to their own incommensurate metaphysics.

### Works Cited

- Andrews, Allan A. "Lay and Monastic Forms of Pure Land Devotionalism: Typology and History." *Numen*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1993, pp. 16-37.  
*JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270396>, doi:10.2307/3270396.
- Blyth, Reginald H., and Reginald H. Blyth. *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics*. Hokuseido Press Tokyo, 1942.
- Closs, August. *The Genius of the German Lyric: An Historical Survey of its Formal and Metaphysical Values*. Cresset Press, 1962.
- Crowson, Michelle K. "No Title." *Proposing a Poetics of Opposition*, 2012.  
*Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*. Edited by Jacqueline I. Stone, and Mariko N. Walter. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu,  
2008, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/byu/detail.action?docID=3413246>.
- Dunn, Charles. *Everyday Life in Traditional Japan*. Tuttle Publishing, 2008.
- Heuvel, Jon V. *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1776-1848*. CUA Press, 2001.
- Kato, Shuichi, and Don Sanderson. *A History of Japanese Literature: From the Manyoshu to Modern Times*. Routledge, 2013.
- Lick, Thomas. *Eichendorff-Bibliographie: Forschungsliteratur Zu Leben Und Werk Joseph Von Eichendorffs 1926-1995*. Scripta Mercaturae, 1998.
- Lurie, David. *The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

- Mackenzie, Lewis. *The Autumn Wind: A Selection from the Poems of Issa*. London: J. Murray Publishers, 1957.
- Makino, Seiichi, and Michio Tsutsui. *Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammars*. The Japan Times, 1994.
- Morton, William S., and J. K. Olenik. *Japan: Its History and Culture*. vol. 3, McGraw-Hill, 1994.
- Nadler, Steven. "Baruch Spinoza." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/spinoza>.
- Peischl, Margaret T. "Joseph Von Eichendorff." *Critical Survey of Poetry, Second Revised Edition*, 2002, pp. 1-7, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=103331CSP11930165000356&site=lrc-live>.
- Porcu, Elisabetta. *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture*. Brill, 2008.
- Sasaki, Gesshō. *A Study of Shin Buddhism*. Eastern Buddhist Society, 1925.
- Schiwy, Günther. *Eichendorff: Der Dichter in Seiner Zeit; Eine Biographie*. CH Beck, 2007.
- Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. *Understanding Buddhism*. Dunedin Academic Press Ltd, 2006.
- Shinkokai, Kokusai B. *Introduction to Classic Japanese Literature*. Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1948.
- Suzuki, Daisetsu T. "Shin Buddhism.", 1970.
- Suzuki, Daisetz T. *Buddha of Infinite Light: The Teachings of Shin Buddhism, the Japanese Way of Wisdom and Compassion*. Shambhala Publications, 2002.

Ueda, Makoto. *Dew on the Grass: The Life and Poetry of Kobayashi Issa*. vol. 20, Brill, 2004.

Wellek, René. "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History." *Stephen Bygrave*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 326-336.

Zernin, Vladimir. "The Abyss in Eichendorff: A Contribution to a Study of the Poet's Symbolism." *The German Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1962, pp. 280-291.  
*JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/401879>, doi:10.2307/401879.

Zmora, Hilary. *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.