

NHK World Interactive, World of Haiku (近藤蕉肝)

2007年7月7日(土曜)放送予定; 7月5日(木)収録予定

Hi, Kei-san. How are you today? Hello, haiku friends around the world. This is Shokan Tadashi Kondo. I hope you are enjoying your life with haiku. Today is July 7, and, according to the classical Japanese calendar, 24 Seasonal Segments (or 二十四節気 nijûshisekki), it is the beginning of Slight Heat (or 小暑). In other words, if you divide the summer into early, middle, and late, this is the beginning of late summer.

Kei: In the new calendar, it still is the middle of hot summer, though.

Anyway, Shokan, how was your trip to Sweden last month?

Well, from June 8~10, I attended the 2nd European Haiku Conference in Vadstena, Sweden. We had 56 participants from 15 different countries. The European Haiku Community is on its way to enhancing unity.

Kei: What exactly did you do?

I gave a talk about seasonal words, and had a *renku* workshop. I also participated in a discussion about haiku and recent technology. We agreed that the use of a blog will help create a larger haiku community including young people. We also had a haiku contest there, and I would like to share some haiku with you. We had 74 entries, and 56 of us voted for two haiku each. The result was all the top three were swept away by Swedish poets. You will see the excellent level of Swedish haiku.

Kei: Could you share some of their haiku?

Both the 1st and the 2nd places were taken by Helga Harle, a Swedish poet, and I would like to share the haiku that won 1st place:

fish jumping / all night / shooting stars

—Helga Harle, Sweden

I feel the season is autumn. The summer night in Sweden is too short and not dark enough for the shooting stars to be clearly visible. The lake water must be warm enough for the fish to be active on the surface. Above all, it

should not be too cold to stay up all night to enjoy jumping fish and shooting stars. This is too beautiful to miss, and you don't want to go to bed. That's what happens in Sweden.

Here is the haiku that won the 3rd place:

The old lady / wipes her window / I wave back

—Lars Granstrom, Sweden

This haiku makes me think twice. When the poet saw the old lady, he thought she was waving at him, but immediately he realized that she was just wiping her window. This is just a funny, embarrassing misjudgment. However, when I think about the season, the serious side of the poem is revealed. I feel winter in this poem, when the windows get foggy. And the winter light, especially in the snow, affects our sight and might cause this kind of misjudgment.

I would also like to share some haiku from the international edition of the Journal of Swedish Haiku Society.

The sail is red / for a moment / at sunset

—Kaj Falkman

Who's out there sailing against the setting sun, we don't know. This haiku might mean the last moment of one's life, when life comes to its intent peak. Kaj Falkman has recently published a book called "A String Untouched" (Red Moon Press, 2006. ISBN: 1-893959-57-0). It is about the haiku by Dag Hammarskjöld's, who is Swedish and was the second secretary general of the UN. He died in an accident when he was flying down to Congo to mediate the domestic conflict. He was awarded the Nobel Prize after his death in 1961 at his age of 56.

Cloudburst— / I want to be / your t-shirt

—Daniel Gahnertz

With the wonderful shower came a beautiful muse who demanded a fresh careful look. Beautiful things are usually hidden until you take a fresh look at them. Usually something unexpected will make you see things differently. This is the reason why haiku poets must pray for gods every moment.

Kei: Now, you said a seasonal word in the first poem was "wipes her window".

It's interesting. 季語 or seasonal words help us expand the image of the haiku.

I have heard some interesting seasonal words. For example, "perfume" represents summer, right?

Are there any other unusual seasonal words in Japanese haiku?

Average Japanese people will be surprised to hear that the **evening glow** (夕焼け yûyake) is a summer seasonal word.

Kei: I thought it's autumn!

The evening glow is most beautiful in the summer because of the active cloud formation. The **red Fuji** (赤富士) is also a summer seasonal word. It is associated with the evening glow after the evening shower. Imagine that the evening shower wets the reddish volcanic ash and the setting sun makes the whole mountain glow. It actually happens once in a blue moon. Another unusual summer seasonal word is the **water goblin festival** (河童祭り kappa matsuri). The water goblin is an imaginary creature, a chimera of a turtle and a human and has a dish-like bald part at the top of its head. It is believed to attack horses and people, its favorite food is cucumber, and it likes to do sumo wrestling.

(鮓、甘酒、香水、匂い袋などありますが)

(sushi, amazake, kôsuï, nioibukuro nadomo arimasuga)

It's time to say good bye. Haiku friends, please send your haiku or write me about seasonal things in your areas. Good bye until next time, and thank you, Kei-san.