

American Sign Language Haiku: Metaphor in Space and Time

.I Introduction

A. Who?

1. Who is Sam Sepah?
2. Who is Jerome Cushman?
3. Who is the interpreter
4. How will we communicate?
5. Use of the interpreter
6. Where are we from?—NTID

B. Why?

1. Robert F. Panara Haiku Contest
2. PEN International (show logo)
3. The Nippon Foundation
4. E-mail address

C. What?

1. Sam signs a haiku (Without voice)

playing hide and seek
chased into the cornfield
our first kiss

2. What do you see?
3. Sam signs the poem again as JC voices it.

II, What is American Sign Language?

A. Grammatical Structure as compared to English

1. Not a sign for each word.
2. Not all iconic but has visual and subliminal representation (connotation vs. denotation) Here is an example from Nicholas Virgilio:

Sam or I signs:

lily...
out of the water
out of itself

Discussion; Variations

I signed this poem for John Stevenson when we first met. He responded with this poem:

in American sign
the lily
opens

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Discussion—

H. Here is another famous and controversial haiku.

T U N D R A

Sam or I will sign “tundra” Thank you, Cor van den Heuvel.

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines “tundra” as “a vast, treeless arctic plain”

Discussion—

IV. ASL haiku and Deaf haiku

A. Sam signs- without voice

sunrise
from the bridge icicles drip
into a thawing stream

(discussion)

Again with voice (discussion)

B. Sam signs-(without voice)

mute clouds
noiseless plants
I’m tongue-tied

Again with voice (discussion) Francine Porad selected this as her favorite poem in the 2001 Panara Haiku Contest. Other judges dismissed all of the haiku with deafness as a theme.

C. Sam signs-

no angel’s voices
no words from the gods
I shall not hear

Discussion: When we add deafness as the topic created by a deaf poet then we have Deaf Haiku.

D. Other poems by hearing people about deafness:

Christopher Herold wrote one:

signing...

Basho's frog plunges in
to my deaf friend's eyes

Juanito from California wrote this haiku:

two deaf mutes--
the silence shifts from fingers
to fingers

How do we know this was written by a hearing person who has little experience with deafness?

Matthew Louviere shows more sensitivity with this poem:

Catching herself
saying too much, the deaf girl
hides her hands

My friend, Jerry Kilbride wrote this one :

silent night
the singing hands
of the deaf child

V. Some Issues of Deafness

A. When did the person become deaf?

1. Pre-lingual deafness (18 months)
2. Post-lingual
3. Sam's experience
4. Impact on language acquisition
5. Deaf Culture
6. Recent general acceptance of ASL (1960's)

B. Questions???

VI. Haiku and the Deaf Connection: The historical connections

A. Basho's benefactor and rich friend, Sugiyama Sanpu (1647-1732)

persistently I stare
at the moon
still, I can not hear

B. Murakami Kijo G. C. Little's poem- "Poem for Murakami Kijo, 1865-1938: A Poet Deafened by Illness"

C. Seiho Awano (1899-1992) became deaf/severely hard of hearing later in life.

one of them
among those mountain climbers
has but one leg

- D. Kiyoshi Tokutomi (1923-1987) Yuki Teikei Haiku Society in California
- E. Robert F. Panara (show his book)

the dusty farmland
perks from the morning shower-
coffee brown and fresh!

- His influence on deaf culture-how
- F. National Theatre of the Deaf -1964 introduce haiku as part of their study of acting and translation and added haiku to their performances

Robert Panara's (constant inspiration) translation of Michael Ketchek's poem:

my father
losing his memory
asks me not to forget him

Discussion.

VII. Member's poems:

- A. Sam signs:

spring green
on the scaffold a workman
swinging his feet

The poet is here. Do you recognize it? Pamela Miller Ness

- B. Here is another of Pamela's poems that creates a problem.

Zen garden
a dry leaf sticks
in the ripples

So It becomes: Zen garden/ in the ripples/ a dry leaf sticks

- C. John Stevenson wrote this poem:

cold blue sky
coughing up
a couple of clouds

D. Penny Harter's book for young people, "Shadow Play" has this haiku:

by the roadside
one cow lifts her face
into our headlights

E. Doris Heitmeyer wrote this poem:

Between lace curtains
the white cat's eyes
follow a snowflake

Do you have any questions?

F. Now let's look at some of the poems from you. (Depends on the time)

VIII. The Future

A. The Robert F. Panara Haiku Contest continues-

B. Articles and possibly a book

C. More in depth study of what is unique and important about ASL haiku

D. More presentations?

We appreciate this opportunity to share our exploration into this wonderful art form: HAIKU

Comments and discussion