

Result of the Fifth Japan-EU English Haiku Contest

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European Policy Division,
European Affairs Bureau,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Comments: Ms. Masako Kakutani, Councilor, Haiku International Association, One of the members of Judge of the fifth Japan-EU English Haiku Contest

1 Grand Prize

(1) Winner of Japan: Mayu Sunamura (Tokyo)

***Water lilies,
drifting softly on the lake,
blooming buds of brotherhood***

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

Water lilies are floating on the surface of the water in a variety of lovely colors. The buds have been blooming one by one like friendship of mankind. The lake covered by water lilies symbolizes brotherhood beyond borders. Furthermore, the lake with water lilies reminds us of the paintings by Monet, the French painter, so that we expect the flowers of friendship between the East and the West will have a bright future.

【Message from Author】

Water lilies, considered to bring happiness in Europe, describe summer in this Haiku. In the language of flowers, water lily signifies a pure and innocent mind. Hoping Japan and the EU develop very good relationships with pure hearts like water lilies. (Sunamura) (provisional translation by MOFA)

(2) Winner of the EU: Robert Lommen (Germany)

***A starry night sky,
merges into spring's first dawn.
Birds already chirping.***

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The color of the sky with innumerable stars has been changing from dark blue to that of rose in the spring dawn. The contrast of the color is so beautiful that we can visualize the scene in an aesthetic way. The seasonal phrase is “spring’s dawn”, which reminds us of the expression “haru-wa-akebono” in Japanese, originally from “Makurano-soushi, the tale of the pillow.” This haiku is impressive because it consists of an audio-visual image with the sky’s colors and sounds of chirping birds. Furthermore, the image of starry night sky is EU, that of dawn is Japan and chirping birds symbolize good communication between EU and Japan.

【Message from Author】

In this Haiku, the starry night sky is an image for the European Union, while the dawn is meant to represent Japan as the land of the rising sun, being UTC/GMT +9 hours ahead. The smooth transition from starry night to dawn visualizes that there are no barriers between Japan and the EU and is therefore intended to lead to the negotiations underway on the Free Trade Agreement. The emphasis on SPRING’S FIRST dawn is a hint to spring equinox (sense of season), indicating that Japan (day) and the EU (night) have equal rights and complement one another. Last but not least, the chirping birds are an image for developing dialogue between EU-Japan. And slowly waking up with the sunline moving from Japan towards the EU, the first chirping birds of the year, also heartily welcome the citizens of the EU by representing spring and therefore the start of something warm and new: A developed EU-Japan relationship (wonderful encounter). (Lommen)

2 Honorable Mentions

(1) Japan Section

①Eiju Cho (Saitama)

*Only oceans in-between us,
The more afar we come from,
The tougher we two feel bonded.*

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The image of oceans encourage us to imagine a magnificent view of nature and to embody the tight bond between “two.”

【Message from Author】

Yes, it is true that there are oceans splitting us two, but I never feel distant since there is a strong bond always connecting us. I am thinking of an Italian friend who lived close to my house as a foreign exchange student last year. (Cho)

②Kiyomi Takeda (Ehime)

*The letter,
send my hopes to my friends far away,
over the sea like a European robin*

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The letters are flying like birds directly to the friends living in foreign countries, which is a fresh and poetic image describing a wonderful relationship.

【Message from Author】

I want to make friends with Europeans someday. Also, I want to exchange letters with them across the sea. (Takeda)

③George Tahara (Kanagawa)

wonderful encounter

to launch Japan-EU space shuttle

to the base of harvest moon

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The contrast between traditional and modern image, such as seasonal phrase “harvest moon” and space shuttle, is excellent.

④Sayaka Tomioka (Osaka)

Roses for two mothers

Congratulations flown over the seas

A couple links unknown folks

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

Two bouquets of beautiful roses for mothers who brought up the couple and congratulations messages from the people who celebrate them, are the heart-warming story of this haiku.

【Message from Author】

At our wedding ceremony, bunch of flowers were presented to mothers of both families as an expression of gratitude from children. Friends and relatives who have not contacted for long time or live abroad started to get in touch by exchanging letters, photos or gifts after this occasion. Through marriage, I realized people around us got to know each other and became like one big family. It is really wonderful encounter. (Tomioka)

⑤Reo Hattori (Fukushima)

peace by piece

everyone meets

as if completing a puzzle

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The expression of “piece by piece” is changed into “peace by piece” and we are impressed by the wonderful imagination of “completing a puzzle” just like fulfilling dreams of peace.

【Message from Author】

Just like jigsaw puzzles, should people and nations be put together, something wonderful may happen. (Hattori) (provisional translation by MOFA)

(2) EU Section

①Florentina Loredana Dalian (Romania)

Sakura Festival -

I stay on the Danube shore

but my heart travels so far away

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

Even though we are separated, we can share our delightful feeling with each other thanks to the view of cherry blossoms.

②Siobhan McKinney (UK)

Shodou brushstrokes sweep

inked words stirred as summer birds

wing far horizons

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

“Shodou” means Japanese calligraphy. Its brushstrokes create inked words which fly away toward horizons like swallows. Beautiful and swift imagination!

③Nora Emri (Hungary)

*Twenty eight children
on a bridge of syllables
welcoming the sun.*

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The image of 28 children from EU countries standing on the “bridge of syllables: haiku” hands in hands and welcoming the sun is interesting and unique.

【Message from Author】

The above lines describe the wonderful encounter of the citizens of the 28 EU countries with Japanese culture, through haiku poetry. The bridge of syllables is haiku itself, which connects EU and Japan. Since EU countries are still considered new to haiku compared to Japan, we are young children in this respect, who look to the ancient sun, Japan, the source of haiku.(Emri)

④Mila Temnyalova (Bulgaria)

*sailing through calm waters
to meet twelve stars —
a paper boat*

【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The image of this haiku is poetic and picturesque, utilizing the symbols of 12 stars and a paper boat, which describe EU and Japan on the “calm waters.”

【Message from Author】

The calm waters signify the amicable relationship between Japan and the EU, and so the two sides inch closer together. The EU is represented by the twelve stars in its flag, while the paper boat is an origami (which is commonly associated with Japan). What makes the paper boat an interesting subject is that it was the earliest evidence of Japan's paper folding to be found in Europe — back in the 15th century. (Temnyalova)

⑤ Andrew Cookson (UK)

*Fallen amber leaves,
that tender crunch beneath us -
our forest echoes.*

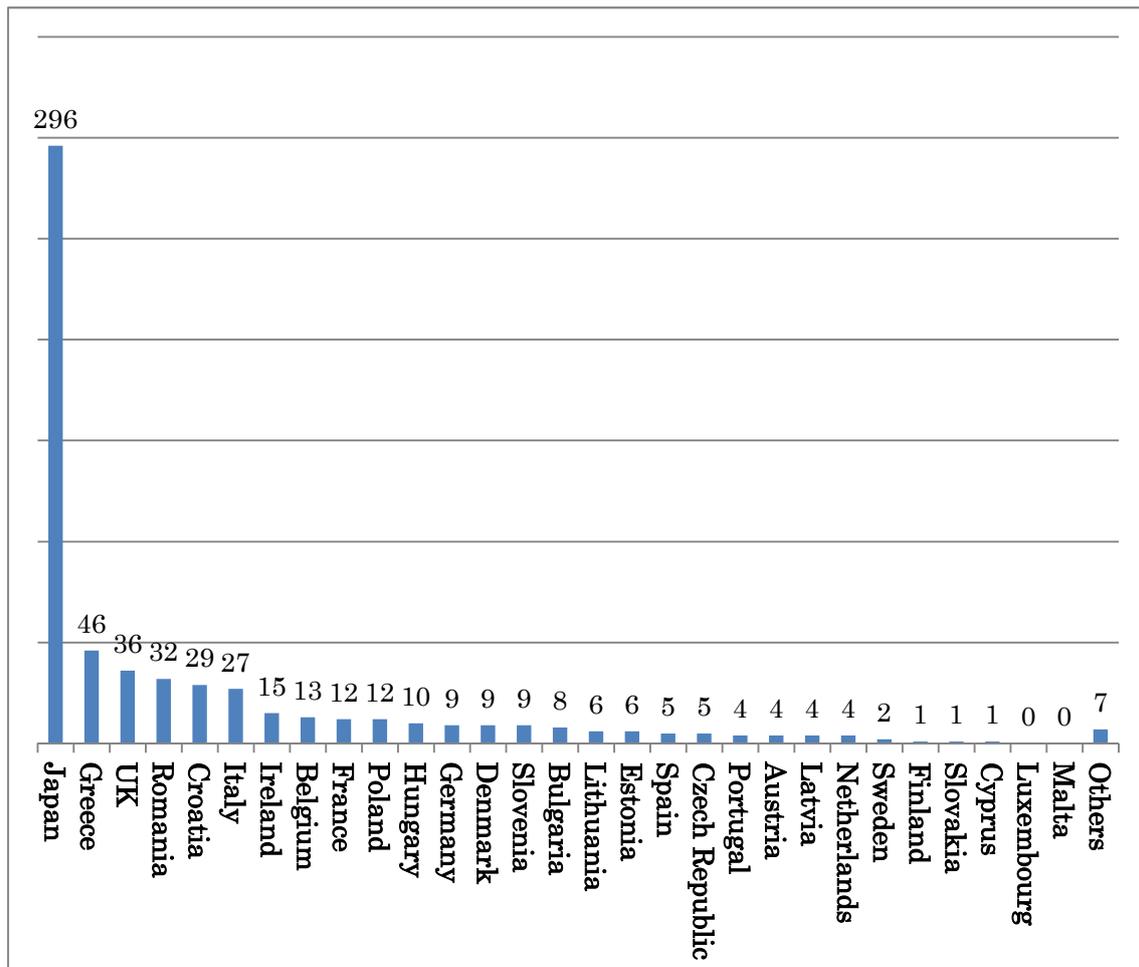
【Ms Kakutani's comment】

The combination of the beautiful colors of fallen leaves and their crunchy and tender sounds are great harmony of nature.

【Message from Author】

Capturing the lifelong meeting of two lovers, with all their shared history.
(Cookson)

3 Number of entries sorted by country



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