

Sugita Hisajo: The Conflict between Haiku and Home

ABSTRACT: In 1922, Sugita Hisajo had been writing haiku poetry for six years; she had been married for eleven. Within that period of time she had firmly established herself as an active member of Takahama Kyoshi's influential circle. But it was a year of personal crises. She would soon abandon poetry before recovering her enthusiasm for the art in later years. Women's education was spreading; rates of literacy were increasing dramatically. Hers was international. With the formation of the bourgeois world based on European and American models, the Japanese home experienced dramatic change. Haiku had its role to play in this change. We can see how Hisajo's poetry touches upon a radical response to this and yet while respecting the tradition. It is exactly these social pressures that inform a close reading of her early masterpieces, and what it means for haiku practice today, especially in light of her exile.

Introduction

The year 1922 was a crucial one for Sugita Hisajo, as a woman and a poet. A close look at the set of emotional crises she endured raises questions about whether poetry is central to our lives. History shows that the mastery of poetry is directly proportional to the extremes of disappointment experienced in one's personal affairs, usually to the point of trauma. Without it, appreciation is limited. It was during this year that Hisajo rejected poetry, which she had arrived at late anyway, had a religious conversion, and only

returned to it when she found religious practice ultimately unsatisfying, at least compared to the here-and-after the world of poetry offers.

The modern era in poetry is defined by a select group of individuals who reject the promises of society, culture and religious faith. To do this is to face the extremes of isolation where depression isn't far behind. The French poet Stéphane Mallarmé, arguably saved from despair by Japanese aesthetics, shows a strong kinship to Hisajo in this regard, in that from out of the depths of despair came a vision of poetry of supreme refinement, international in its affinities, and thought out with a sense of mission. Both single-handedly edited journals that were aimed toward women; both of these ventures, requiring all their talents, were short-lived. The language Mallarmé used to describe his conversion experience, never adequately expressed, resorts to Buddhist themes, which was very unusual for a Frenchman at that time: the ephemerality of events; the terror of the void; suffering as a means to insight – though from this awareness, astonishing beauty. We see Hisajo face the void too, a world empty of meaning, but less from a theological perspective than from a position of a woman struck by her own difference:

So long as I lower myself before you
I will meet you as a woman who believes
Celebration of the Buddha's birth ¹

It would be granting poetry too much credit to say these gifts come from God, for it was during these years in the mid-1860s Mallarmé realized that without the resources or connections to work in Paris, an ability to be surrounded by the poets and painters and

actresses he loved as much as life itself, he would remain forever stuck in the provinces with an unexciting teaching post, married to a foreigner he may have wed out of obligation, a world away, essentially, from the life he had hoped to live.²

It is undeniable that the same social forces of exclusion were at play in the creation of Emily Dickinson too. The extraordinary output of poetry she produced in the years 1862-1863 suggests here was a woman who felt she had nowhere else to turn. If we look at the poem that begins,

Title divine – is mine!

The wife – without the Sign!

we recognize the same themes that begin “The Soul selects her own Society” but with a much more explicit social critique; she declares an inability to live the kind of life where women treat their titles like possessions:

“My husband” – women say –

Stroking the Melody –

Is *this* the way?

No, it cannot be, for those poets who have freed themselves from emotional crises, at best to write, but primarily to be engaged with the world that denied them their freedom.

Hisajo and her place within the home

In 1922, Hisajo had been practicing haiku for six years; she had been married for eleven. She was first introduced to it by her brother Akabori. Thanks to her father's position as a public official, they had enjoyed an international education, and at schools in the Ryūkyū islands and Taipei where there were few, if any Japanese around. No more than several months after she began writing she was published, remarkably, in Takahama Kyoshi's influential *Hototogisu*. Along with other women they were asked to write on the theme of "kitchen." From the perspective of gender politics in the early 21st century this sounds somewhat degrading, reinforcing the second-class status women in public positions were required to accept. However, if haiku is about anything, it shows the genius of the creative mind when freedoms are exactingly limited.

In her outstanding 2003 critical biography called *Sugita Hisajo: A Haiku Poet of Beauty and Nobility*, Sakamoto Miyao, a poet herself of unusual historical sensitivity and understanding, details the kind of education and life experience that set this woman from Kagoshima apart. It is well-known among practitioners of haiku, and the general public in Japan thanks to popularizations of Hisajo's life, the emotional pain she experienced while living within a failed marriage. Ms. Sakamoto broadens the perspective in important ways, stripping layer upon layer of ideological camouflage until by the end we are at last able to see and meditate upon the woman herself.³

To help contextualize the poetry she will, for example, require us to have some sympathy for Hisajo's husband Sugita Unai, conventionally an easy target from a feminist perspective, for refusing to grant his wife a divorce. An artist either gains recognition early, or takes longer than is expected or hoped. Unai may have been one of the latter, but we will never know. He had chosen to dedicate himself to work and family over his initial ambitions to become a painter, which was what Hisajo had been promised when they were married. Anyone familiar with the immense amount of work required of a middle school teacher in Japan knows full well the emotional investment, the scarcity of personal time available. Ms. Sakamoto looked at Unai's paintings from his university years and sees promise but not fulfillment. And that couldn't develop once he married. We can only imagine what was going through his mind once his wife, after five years of marriage, took up art on her own, to be recognized for her talent right away. It was a marriage full of disappointment, according to Hisajo. But if it is true that great artists must reach a crisis in order to receive their guiding insight, Hisajo may have needed marriage to serve that purpose, and if that were the case Unai would not be solely to blame for the failure of their marriage.⁴

It should never be overlooked that Hisajo and Unai came from prominent families. Despite Unai's family's social status, which was acceptable to Hisajo's parents, his position as a school teacher created a home life that was a step down from the privileged education, the international travel she was raised as a girl to appreciate in adulthood. No sooner than Hisajo entered the world of haiku than we see her recording in her diary a reading of *The Tale of Genji*, a work of art, it is now believed, that received its canonical status thanks to Japan's entry onto the map of world literature, the effort of

educators, artists, and politicians who would work night and day at translation to help place it there. Perhaps just as significantly, we see her expressing a strong desire for someone to discuss the masterpiece with her. It is magnificent to see in Hisajo, from our perspective, a woman striving to enter the glorious annals of Japanese literature while at the same time seeking to preserve whatever is being socially lost as a well-bred daughter of the Meiji government. It is this gain to lose that best represents Ms. Sakamoto's "beauty" and "nobility" she refers to in the title of her critical biography.⁵ Much of Hisajo's energies as a poet, Ms. Sakamoto writes, were the result of an ever-increasing awareness of this reality: that money was scarce; that her two daughters wouldn't be receiving the same social benefits and graces she had.

Hisajo's difference as a woman and a poet is evident from the start. When a call went out for poems on the theme of "kitchen" to be published in *Hototogisu*, hers reflected a strong awareness of the world outside a woman's domain, forced upon her or otherwise:

Winter wind chills –
The slates beneath the sink
Have dried

It is not necessary for an appreciation of the poem, but I find it helpful to know that outside her home in Kokura, there was a stone path to the sea. For a woman who would eventually write masterpieces about pursuing a single butterfly through the folds of Japan's sacred mountains or in hearing the mountain cuckoo alone in those same valleys, suggested as the voice of humanity, it helps to compare the slates of the kitchen

splattered with water with those carved out of the greater world with rain and dew on them where she had hoped to be.

Haiku and home improvement

Social roles were required of Hisajo in a way that was her nudge into the world of poetry. It's important to look at the changing nature of Japanese society into which the "kitchen" poems were placed, to see exactly what aspects of the culture she was addressing, for she was no "nature" poet pure and simple. Deep structural changes were happening all around her, and with a foreigner's eye to Japan, thanks to her education and upbringing abroad, she was able to observe them clearly.

Jordan Sand, in his *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930*, speaks of the age's neologism *katei*, which can mean either "home" or "family", "home economics" or "home management" depending on the context, created as a word by a need to assimilate the English, middle-class notion of it as Japan continued to modernize:

Katei as a modifier feminized (the home). It also implied half of an equation, in which new public institutions and the nascent public space of society formed the other half. With the assistance of such expressions, the word entered common usage.

In practical terms the family dinner table reflected the changes and one's place in the socioeconomic order: whether one sat on chairs or the floor (as all had done in the past); the question of which member of the household would serve rice from the rice bucket; would servants be allowed to eat in the same room; the uses of Western dinnerware for status as much as convenience. Discussions over dinner were encouraged for the first time, to mirror, perhaps unwittingly, the political concerns shaped by governmental institutions and agencies. These were the structural changes set in place that, slowed down by the militarization soon to come, would eventually cohere into one of the world's strongest middle classes postwar.

A Marxist critique would ask us to consider that the domesticity encouraged of women and their place as guardian of the home did not result in patriarchal domination so much as the stability required for the class that would ask its underclass to fight its wars for her. The gains for women had been tremendous since the revolution of 1867. The horrifying Confucian ethics regarding a woman's place had long been replaced thanks to reformers of education like Fukuzawa Yukichi. However these democratic and socialist reforms were being subverted by the growing commercialization of middle class cultures with *katei*, as a term, at the center of it:

If the nuance of the term *katei* was feminine, conversely, its popularity in print represented the discovery of a growing market of literate women. Tokutomi Soh[□] was the first publisher to exploit the term as a device to open this market, beginning the journal *Katei zasshi* in 1892 as a companion to his monthly *The Nation's Friend* (Kokumin no tomo). The first issue contained columns on

household management, cooking, and prices of daily necessities, as well as an article on trends in women's education and a biography of Garibaldi's wife.⁶

Enter the small world of haiku into the process of mass social mobilization worldwide.

There were serious discussions taking place in the columns on haiku's relationship to *katei*. As a newly minted father himself, Takahama Kyoshi was very much aware that the world of haiku held a direct relationship to the evolving, social world that includes women's advancement into the middle class. It is in this spirit that he encouraged the inclusion of women poets in *Hototogisu* with the commissioning of a set of poems on the theme of "kitchen".

With this in mind, we can see with clarity the *shasei* school advocated by Kyoshi, descriptions purely from nature. As a theory of poetry it is completely in line with this economically strong, emerging middle class with its growing taste for culture, pop or otherwise, as rates of literacy increased. Anti-intellectual, non-polemical, as a critique of that culture supremely disinterested, *shasei* was and is well-adapted to middle class norms (in the same way French Impressionism was in painting). It is worlds apart from the socialism behind the poetry of Mallarmé and Van Gogh at the turn of the 20th century, and arguably Dickinson's socialism as she dared to question the roles required of her in extremely parochial and conservative New England (As someone who was raised in the Boston area, I can attest that things haven't changed much since Dickinson's time, the "my husband" of proud wives still used as possessively as Dickinson implied.)

I will place my cards on the table and say that though I respect Kyoshi's work, I find his poetry dull and uninspiring. Its attention to an "aha" moment strictly based on the seasons and absent of cultural engagement leaves a very narrow field for poetry. It certainly doesn't go "far beyond the field" in ways I find it does with Basho, Mallarmé and Dickinson whose interests in poetry were as much about an engagement with power structures as it was the "nature" they saw all around them.

It is one of the great ironies of haiku practice in the English-language world today that though many would take Basho for their teacher, in practice the prevailing wisdom is Kyoshi's *shasei* – a purely intuitive practice that rejects intellectualism in all its forms. Kyoshi, though he lacked Shiki's bluster, didn't think much of Basho either. Neither a Zen poet nor a patron saint of the arts, Basho was clearly an intellectual that challenged Tokugawa era norms, a theme taken up convincingly by Miyamoto Yuriko in her outstanding assessment from a socialist perspective, not from the perspective of haiku mastery, which she had the humility to admit she doesn't possess.⁷

I am arguing two things, then:

- 1) The world of the so-called "modern haiku" is the legacy of Kyoshi's conservative, domestic form of art. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that his split with Hisajo, effectively exiling her from his circle in the late 1930s, which took her by surprise, was over this philosophical difference as much as any conflict of personality.

- 2) That what most of us in the English-language haiku world take for Basho's art, is in fact Kyoshi's. I fully support Haruo Shirane who, in *Juxtapositions 1.1*, advocated what I had been saying to myself for years: writers of haiku need to be more engaged with the culture at large if it wishes to be treated as a first-class art. Our poets need greater historical sensitivity, which is totally absent from the scene, as any perusal of the magazines will show when compared to the historical engagement seen in haiku by any number of contemporary, Japanese poets. This absence is glaring. As I write, haiku poets are being quoted in mainstream newspapers within the milieu of the 70th anniversary to the conclusion of The Pacific War, which requires a certain amount of authority for this to be even possible. You cannot have this authority if you ignore culture.⁸

In terms of the *katei* movement extending into the *shasei* theory of haiku, Hisajo appears like a radical poet. Home was not the center of her life but a base for exploration. She had what the great liberal critic Katō Shōichi said about Murasaki at the Heian court, a position as an insider close enough to power to analyze it, and far enough away to speak about it with accuracy. It is no surprise that once Kyoshi exiled Hisajo from the center of influence her major work was effectively done, as if the oath of taking up the life of an itinerant nun which we see in medieval women's diaries had been forced upon her. Her genius then was in getting it done, sneaking in her social critique under the auspices of being a faithful member of the tribe. It helps that haiku poetry allows these echoes to reach us over time through its uses of ambiguity. Even as the

shasei movement and its English-language offspring continue to do its best to eliminate social critique as an inspiration for art.

Hisajo among women

How aware Hisajo was of her own radicalism is an intriguing question. The contrast with Yosano Akiko is fascinating. They were defined, fundamentally, by their marriages, one successful, the other tragically not. It was the one who had the successful marriage that addressed feminist concerns explicitly in her essays, about the question of divorce, for example, or women's education, while the other kept these concerns largely implicit to her poetry.

We see Hisajo at work in 1922 converting those like Hashimoto Takako into haiku poets, which as practice wasn't feminist by nature, accepting only those who were ready to fully commit, as opposed to those who would treat it as no more than an enlightening hobby. She is seen flipping through the pages of *Hototogisu* on the train. A woman considering taking up haiku by the name of Ikegami Kōkinjin remembers being told, "My name is Sugita Hisajo. If you are ready to commit, if you'll allow me to show you, you are welcome to come to my home. I will teach you everything you need to know." You have to love the conviction.

In these words, in Hisajo's advocacy which wasn't exactly democratic, we can hear hints of her warning off those who would respond to haiku as no more than an extension of the very world of *katei* women were looking for when mingling with male poets for

favor. According to Ikegami Fujiko in her 1957 “Six Women and their Attraction to Haiku”, there were power dynamics involved in the milieu that lent value to poetry outside of things like craft, devotion to mastery in solitude. Among those young women who were looking for their start among the influential in the late Meiji, Taisho eras (roughly 1900 to 1926), there was a 24 year old by the name of Nakagawa Tomijo who visited Shiki and Kawahashi Hekigotō. Ikegami recalls the kinds of conversation that swirled around young women like this beauty:

“If you wish to make Tomijo your wife, be my guest,” one would say with a suppressed smile.

“Yeah you’re right. She’s not yet 25, no steady work. No desire for a home...”⁹

Shiki acknowledged these circumstances involved with Tomijo by writing a poem that reflects his feelings toward a beautiful woman who, if the scene doesn’t work out for her, can be heard like geese in a line flying for the north, joining them. The sad cry of these women returning home alone is the source of the poem. I am sure the image of Yosano Akiko was on the mind of every woman who had dreams of becoming a poet. Because it was exactly these kinds of social circumstances that made a tremendous contribution to the success of her breakout *Midaregami*, of the lengthy poetry writing sessions, the walks by the sea, the discovery of new alliances and partners. Not only did these circumstances forge Akiko’s poetry into a masterpiece collection, it landed her a husband she became devoted to as much as poetry.

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Thus the kind of social pressures Hisajo faced, beginning with her “kitchen” poems. She was 32 in 1922 with two daughters, embroiled in a profoundly unhappy marriage, and didn’t have the luxuries of these freer, younger women, or the social stability of a more successful marriage like Akiko had. You get the impression with Hisajo that *katei* and *haiku* weren’t at odds with each other but at war.

How was Hisajo received by other women? As she tried to instruct them, I am reminded of Margaret Fuller in New England, an intellect too dedicated, too demanding, too committed to the classical past to be clubbable.

Hisajo and the new home

One woman who wasn’t intimidated was Hashimoto Takako. Reflecting on her initiation into poetry through Hisajo this year in 1922, she recalls how her husband Toyojir□, who she would remain devoted to until his death, felt threatened by Hisajo’s presence. An architect who built the household at Kokura, attracting many artists of the area like to a salon, he was, however, taken aback by this woman invading his home two to three times a week to discuss poetry with his wife, often long into the night.

The following conversation between Toyojir□ and Hisajo is recalled in Shimizu Mayumi’s 1969 *Hashimoto Takako: The Pilgrimage of a Haiku Poet*:

When he would intimate “It’s getting late” so as to put an end to the marathon discussions, she would respond “I apologize for being such a burden, but I’ve brought bento so that we might all continue this into the night.”

“That might be fine for you, but what about looking after your husband and children?”

“I’ve made the preparations; all that is needed is to strike the flame to bring the soup broth to a boil. As for eating, they can do that for themselves.”

When Hisajo said this Toyojir’s face went pale.

“If that’s your attitude to keeping house, I suggest you stop coming to mine.”¹⁰

Ms. Sakamoto writes that Hisajo was as enthusiastic about teaching as she was haiku. She despised receiving rewards for it; flowers, like you would a dance instructor, of favors of any kind, especially money. And this inclination during a time when she was financially strapped.

The earlier masterpiece written in 1918 cannot be said to be strictly erotic:

Disrobing after flower-viewing

As the cords cling to my shape

Well there are those colors too¹¹

From the perspective of English-language haiku according to the anthologies, handbooks and magazines, this poem has broken too many rules to be exemplary: (a) there is not one “aha” moment but many; (b) it requires knowledge outside of the poem

to fully appreciate it; (c) it is a form of autobiography much more than an objective response to one's experience (this couldn't be further from *shasei*); (d) to bring all this together for appreciation requires intellect as much as intuition.

It is indicative of the milieu in which it was written, however, that appraisal, initially, centered on the poem's sensuality, thoughts of layers of fabric falling from a bare shoulder, the come hither of its proposal, etc. Hisajo felt the need to respond a half year later that the poem is as much about the exhaustion of maintaining beauty, as it is the exquisite fatigue having witnessed it firsthand yourself.

1922 saw the publication of her other early masterpiece, the one that referenced Ibsen's *Doll House*.

Patching up tabi socks

As a teacher's wife

I won't become Nora¹²

We are in a different world from Hisajo and the people of her generation in this sense: who among us in the middle class ever mend socks nowadays? Isn't it easier if you're struggling for cash to just buy them new at your local discount store? The habit of "mending socks" appears in Katō Shōichi's memoir too, at a time when he was struggling for money postwar while living in France. Each time he'd mend them they'd become shorter. He'd buy a new pair only when they looked truly ridiculous.¹³ Mending socks are also mentioned in Hayashi Fumiko's essay from the 1930s on "ordinary

women”. Mending socks, washing clothes, chatting to one’s neighbor superficially about one’s children, these are the activities of “ordinary women”; these cause a strong reaction in Fumiko, of irritation and disgust, but not as revoltingly as sophisticated women who would look down upon such activities. These thoughts about mending socks occur at a time when she’s considering starting a family herself.¹⁴ In Hisajo’s 1918 poem that features these moments of mending socks the divide between “ordinary women” and the sophisticated class is clearly represented in this haiku. Again, there’s nothing “aha” about this moment but a recognition of the deep complexity of social relations.

Hisajo and the religious turn

It would seem, then, that Hisajo was well-positioned within Kyoshi’s circle to continue producing masterpieces of this kind. But then she quit haiku. Superficially the reasons had to do with marital troubles; the burying of her father’s remains at his home in Shinano country (present-day Nagano); a kidney ailment that required her to spend time healing in Tokyo with her mother at her side. All indications, however, point to a deeper crisis, a religious one that we can surmise was long-standing, and never far from turning into a crisis, a condition of loneliness in the world that she was never able to fully escape, a subject that she would haunt her later years.

It was during this crisis year that she got baptized as a Christian and entered the church. She became absorbed studying scripture. Though she would eventually abandon the church for haiku once and for all several years later, it is said that scripture left a big influence on her later style and language.

When reading the Bible
The loneliness of the world –
Showering blossoms

This doesn't read as a comment about the God of scriptures so much as a description of her feelings for having committed to poetry. In one sense there is the poetry of Psalms, in the other, the moments of haiku that likewise are fluttering beyond the page.

A major question about Hisajo when reflecting on the life and art is whether she ever really set out to be a poet, destined to it from the beginning. You can feel her being drawn toward poetry as a last resort that turns out to be the only resort. This is a much different narrative from art as vocational, or an individual who was God-inspired from the start, eventually to recognize one's mission only late in life. Certainly she cannot be characterized as having made a career out of poetry, like Seamus Heaney did. Had family life been satisfying you get the sense she may have never written poetry at all. From 1911 to 1916 she gave *katei* her best shot. From marriage, to motherhood, to recognition for her artistry, to abandonment, to baptism and return, she reached the same precondition of mastery that Mallarmé and Dickinson underwent, coming to the realization that only poetry can best put to use this inescapable loneliness one feels. She may have been aware that she had this need even before she became fully committed to anything. Marriage itself may not have disappointed her. She may have had a need for marriage to disappoint her first so that she could reach the world she desired. That

wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility for a passionate, inspired person, to suffer first so as to familiarize herself with what the rest of the world is going through.

¹ ぬかづけばわれも善女や佛生會 (nukazukeba ware mo zennyō ya busshōe)
The celebration of Buddha's birthday takes place on April 8. It is considered a season word for spring.

² Mallarmé to Henri Cazalis, July 18, 1868: "Who knows, you may even be able to bring Des Essarts from Mâcon. Convince him, and I'll be very grateful to you, for I sigh, perverted as I am by the local patois, for the conversation of French poets." Stéphane Mallarmé. *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*. Translated by Rosemary Lloyd. University of Chicago Press, 1988.

³ Sakamoto Miyao, *Sugita Hisajo: Bi to Kakuchō no Haijin*. Tokyo: Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2003. Under her real name Kuwahara Ayako (1945 -), the poet has produced much scholarship including work on the African-American experience in America, and Elizabethan drama in England, among others. As a poet under the name of Sakamoto Miyao, furthermore, she displays the kind of philosophical depth and aesthetic complexity that is a perfect match for her subject. She has said in a preface to one of her collections that what characterizes haiku poetry, what stimulates it into form, is the way the beauty and nobility of tradition tends to pop into the frame, complicating the form,

It's called Meiji, fluttering
The era of bluish purple
A butterfly of the rainy season

It would be a great loss if her critical biography on Hisajo, a major figure in Japanese culture, does not reach the global audience it deserves.

⁴ See Debra Woodland Bender and Eiko Yachimoto's "Echoes over Hills: The Poetry of Sugita Hisajo" for an overview in English of the life, which includes commentary on a selection of the poems. *World Haiku Review*: Volume 1, Issue 3 (2001).
<https://sites.google.com/site/worldhaikureview2/whr-archives/waves-of-moonlight>

⁵ I have chosen the word "nobility" over "dignity" though the word 格調 (kakuchō) implies both. "Nobility", for the traditional aspects of Japanese literature Hisajo wished to align herself with, going back to the Manyōshū and the world of Murasaki, "dignity", for the integrity she wished to maintain while losing one's social status. Both words apply, then, for the religious observance we often see in her poetry.

⁶ Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2005. Pages 25-27

discuss the term *katei* while the rest of Sand's chapter "Domesticating Domesticity" provides much detail on the bourgeois world forming around Hisajo, among women poets, of the Taisho and Showa eras.

⁷ Miyamoto Yuriko, "Basho ni tsuite". *Shinjo-en*, January 1940.
http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000311/files/2812_8869.html

⁸ See for example, Hashimoto Masaaki, "Sensu taiken dan Kumagaya no haijin – Kaneko-san, anpo-han-soshi mo uttae/Saitama". (A Talk on War Experience: A Haiku Poet from Kumagaya, Saitama – Kaneko-san urges reconsideration of the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty) Mainichi Shimbun, August 13, 2015. In this article, where Tōta Kaneko at 95 years old, in asking us to consider the dangers of rescinding the Japanese Constitution's peace provision Article 9, quotes poet Fujiki Kiyoko's poem to help make his case,

To die in war
32 teeth
So perfectly arranged

He is quoted as saying, "The horrors of the battlefield are indescribable. I don't want the young to know what it's like... we need to protect Article 9." While women were required to be passive during wartime, women nowadays have the ability to truly speak their minds, he says. Kiyoko was the exception, which is why we need to understand her. And, I would argue, Hisajo too.

⁹ Quoted in Haiku New Generation, "Kindai ni okeru haiku riterashi no keisei-katei ni tsuite". (Haiku in the modern age as it relates to the process of literacy taking shape.) August 14, 2009. http://haikunewgeneration.blogspot.com/2009/08/blog-post_14.html

¹⁰ IBID.

¹¹ 花衣ぬぐやまつはる紐いろいろ (hanagoromo nugu ya matsuwaru himo iro iro)
The *iro iro* of this poem's final line is very difficult to translate for its multiplied meanings. *Iro* is colors, and the doubling of it means "many colors" or "how colorful". However the very common phrase "iro iro" means something else. You will ask a friend, "How did things go at the meeting?" "Not so well." "Why, what happened?" "*Iro iro*." In other words, there are too many things to discuss and she would rather not say. I feel something of that use of *iro iro* in the poem too, which I have tried to bring out through the translation.

¹² 足袋つぐやノラともならず教師妻 (tabi tsugu ya Nora to mo narazu kyōshi tsuma)
The subjectivity of this poem would seem to require first-person narrative, a definitive "I" when being translated, and yet I agree with Makoto Ueda's choice translating it in *Far Beyond the Field* as if she's watching herself from a third-person perspective:

she mends socks
not quite a Nora
this teacher's wife

I have only chosen the more intimate first-person perspective because of how closely this poem feels to Hisajo's actual circumstances, even though the register is distant, without language heightening the effect.

¹³ Katō Shōichi, *A Sheep's Song: A Writer's Reminiscences of Japan and the World*. Translated by Chia-ning Chang. Oakland: University of California Press, 1999.

¹⁴ Hayashi Fumiko, "Heibon na onna". (Ordinary Women) December 1937.
http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000291/files/56044_50796.html