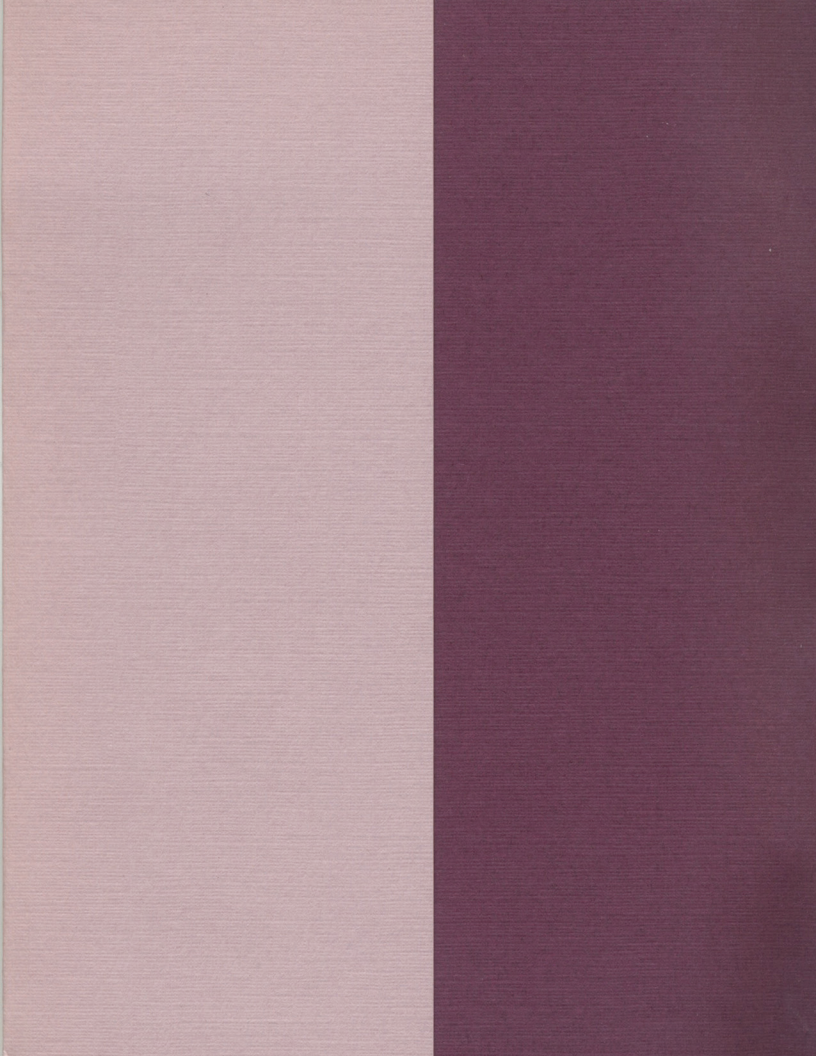


Chrysanthemum Love



Fay Aoyagi



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Haiku by Fay Aoyagi

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Introduction

Three times, my “home turf” has changed. First was Tokyo, my birthplace. My childhood dream was to become a novelist. My mother discouraged the idea, insisting that “Writers are unhealthy.” In New York, I started writing again — in English, my second language. Though my creative writing teacher encouraged me to write more, several fellow writers asked me, “But, Fay, how could you write like this? Who’s been translating your work?” My self-confidence was shattered.

Several years later in San Francisco,
I tried my hand at poetry I attended
workshops and read at coffee houses.
Then I ran out of gas. Finally, I started a
love affair with haiku and tanka. I found
my voice.

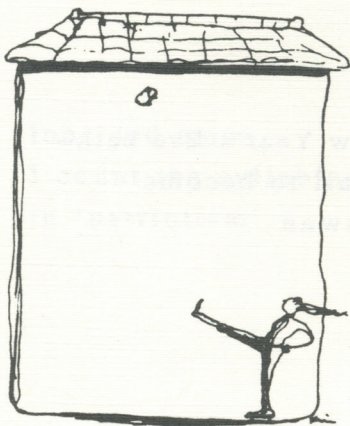
If you believe haiku must be about
nature, you may be disappointed with
my work. There is a lot of “me” in my
haiku. I write very subjectively. I am not
interested in Zen and the oriental flavor
to which some Western haiku/tanka
poets are attracted. I love the shortness
and evocativeness of haiku.

I don't write to report the weather.
I write to tell my stories.

Although I compose haiku in Japanese,
as well, all the poems in this book
were written in English. They are not
translations.

I have been in and out of the places, in
and out of the languages, and in and out
of love. The Japanese character for “Fay”
means “to fly.” I hope my haiku muse
will fly with me until the last day of my
life.

Fay Aoyagi
Autumn, 2003
San Francisco



New Year's Eve bath —
I fail to become
a swan

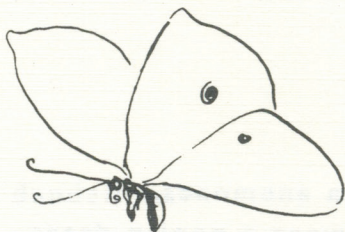
lopsided moon
I count the syllables
in 'patriotism'

Hiroshima day —
a cat pokes and pokes
a cicada shell

summer willow —
slender shoulders
of a Noh master-to-be

for the rabbits
on the misty moon
. . . fado

split pomegranate —
my favorite authors
all émigrés



sea anemones —
I wear a poplin dress
for him

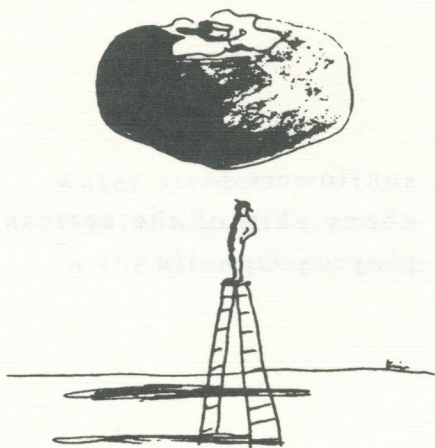
dandelions —
a lone runner
circling the field

some white . . . some red . . .
fallen camellias
and my lies

my high wire act
for you
and this moon

overslept
I blame the quietness
of rain

today
I want to be Zorro
high autumn sky



sunflowers —
ebony skin of the actress
playing Ophelia

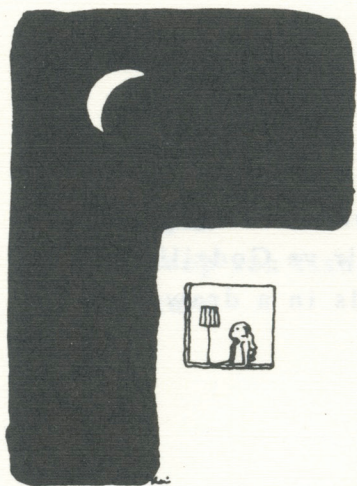
water striders
the immigrant's son
in the Governor's race

citizenship interview
the officer's accent
thicker than mine

migrating birds —
the weight
of my first voters' guide

morning chill —
the Stars & Stripes
on his breast pocket

magnolias —
he folds and unfolds
a handkerchief



dream-eating pillow
tapir vs Godzilla
ends in a draw

monologue
of the deep sea fish
misty stars

winter deepens
a ticket
to ride Pegasus

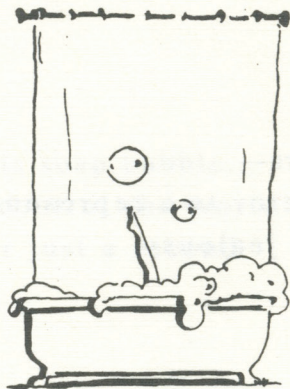
August waves
I tell my history
to jellyfish

Nagasaki Anniversary
I push
the mute button

intact zero fighter
at the Smithsonian —
cherry blossom rain

Master Catfish
in the murky pond —
I will not die here

cold rain —
my application
to become a crab



stars —
one or two representing
my jealousy

this soap bubble . . .
I control the world
for just a second

dinner for two
between our silence
the oyster shells

elderberries —
his childhood ritual
unfamiliar to me

hydrangea rain —
a letter from the land
of soy sauce

a winter butterfly —
my first marriage
in the jewelry box

feeling as small as
a quail without a spouse
scent of distant sea

red camellias —
the assurance
of my breasts



godless month
I refuse to join ‘ooooooooommmm’
at a yoga class

torn pieces
of crime scen tape —
snake into a hole

ocean fog—
I can't recall the name
of my first lover

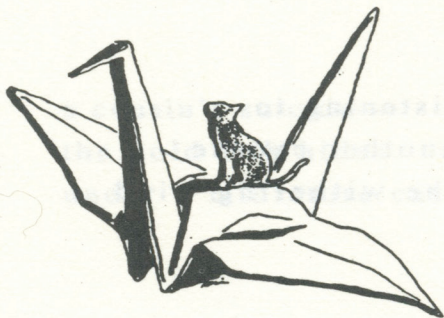
tangerine pyramids
his beeper vibrates
again

instant replay
of his first move
I ask for another Merlot

in the goldfish tank
he treasures —
my sin floats

Independence Day
I let him touch
a little bit of me

Tanabata stars —
she used to have a name
bridged with a hyphen



listening to
another excuse
the withering wind

a cousin's suicide —
the gold fish hides
under a miniature castle

on the rice paper
ancient wind
in black ink

sorting the letters
of my deceased friend —
a tortoise cries

needle marks
on his right arm —
shivering sparrow

her dried
sumi-e brush
winter sunset

he says he talks to
the spider's shadow —
autumn melancholy

fireflies —
a kamikaze mother whispers
her son's name



unexpected pregnancy
she spits out
watermelon seeds

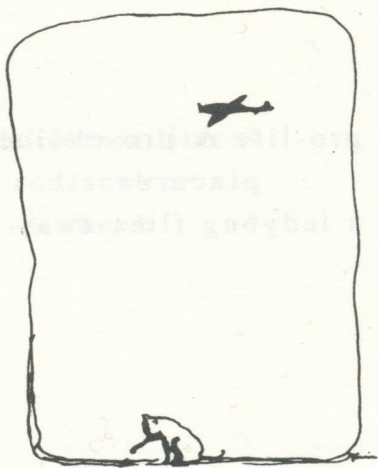
tadpoles with legs —
I assure him there's no need
to leave his wife

Mother's Day —
one uterus lighter
than the last year

New Year's mirror —
I practice the smile
of a dictator

moonlit sunflowers
at a 24-hour deli —
his ‘good night’ lingers

fallen camellias —
I learn the name
of a baby with his eyes



pro-life & pro-choice
placards
a ladybug flies away

California lilac —
I rediscover
Steinbeck

ironing
a white handkerchief
and my ancestral guilt

as though they were
Miss America contestants
the cockscombs

brushing my hair
one hundred times
cat in love

yellow daffodils
an urge to
buy a banjo

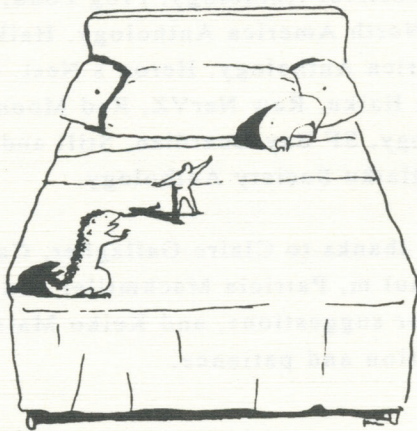
going Dutch
for the omelettes
and this sea breeze

a new summer hat
she may be out
of love

Acknowledgments

Some of these haiku have appeared in Basho Festival Anthology, *Frogpond*, *Geppo*, Haiku North America Anthology, Haiku Society of America Anthology, *The Heron's Nest*, *Mariposa*, *Modern Haiku*, *Raw NerVZ*, *The Red Moon Anthology*, *SF Bay Guardian*, *Still*, and Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Anthology.

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Fay Aoyagi was born in Tokyo, Japan. She has been living in the U.S. since 1983. She joined a Japanese haiku group, Ten'i in 2000. In 2003, she was awarded Ten'i Shinjinsho (New Voice Award for Ten'i members) and became a dojin of Ten'i. Her haiku translations include *Kyoto no Koi* (*Love in Kyoto*) by Madoka Mayuzumi (PHP Interface, Tokyo, 2001) and Kiyoko's *Sky* by Kiyoko Tokutomi, co-translated with Patricia J. Machmiller (Brooks Books, Decatur, Illinois, 2002).

Keiko Matsumoto was born in Kobe, Japan. She studied illustration at Parsons School of Design in New York City and graduated with honors. She returned to Tokyo in 1989. Her illustrations appeared in various advertisements, magazines and books. She has solo exhibitions regularly in Tokyo. To see more of her work, please visit her web site <http://www.c-channel.ne.jp/Kei/>



