



Haiku by Tadato Nakatsuka

translated by Eric Selland

translator's note: I was asked to translate these two haijin (the other being Ginema) for the Tokyo Poetry Festival held in September 2011. They were amongst a fairly large and eclectic group selected by organizer Natsuishi Ban'ya. As far as I know, the poets themselves chose the haiku to be included.

Tadato Nakatsuka

Born 1949 in Tokyo. In 1915 my grandfather, Ippeki Nakatsuka, became publisher of the free-verse haiku magazine, *Kaikō*, edited by Hekigotō Kawahigashi. My father, Mayumi Nakatsuka, was publisher until his sudden passing in 1993, at which point I became the third generation owner and publisher of the magazine. The magazine reached its 1,000th issue in 2004. In 2008, along with a group of friends who share a love of free-verse haiku¹, I started the Tokyo Free-Verse Haiku Association as a means of moving beyond the limits of the magazine framework. Through this new organization

¹ *translator's note:* “Free-verse haiku” is haiku which does not use the 5-7-5 pattern, or allows itself to fall somewhat outside those constraints. The lack of seasonal words (kigo) may sometimes come along in the same package, though not necessarily. This innovation has been one that has been available to haikuists ever since early experiments of the Modernist period (1916-1938). Some haikuists, such as Nagata Koi, may occasionally be loose with the count, but this does not necessarily make them “officially” a free-verse haikuist. I personally do not like the term “free-verse haiku” because it ties haiku too much to English language assumptions, and is ultimately meaningless to us since by the time it is translated there will be no more 5-7-5 pattern anyway.

we are working toward a resurgence of free-verse haiku, as well as its improvement.
Last year we held a combined meeting with a fixed-form haiku group. I continue to
work toward the building of a better future for haiku.

神と自然と人間

Gods, Nature, and Humans

元旦金魚ブクブク去年のあぶく

New Year's day – gold fish blow last year's bubbles

春はまだだよ辛夷間抜けな欠伸

It's not spring yet – its absence emerging from between the magnolias

笑顔でずかずかやってきて春になる海

Barging in with a big smile, ocean becomes spring

春の蛇口からこぼれ出たさくら

Cherry blossoms spill from the faucet of spring

春へのホーム電車は右肩上がりです

The train heading toward the platform of spring
Comes in with its right shoulder raised

この日わたし身に余るほどの桜

On this day, more cherry blossoms than I deserve

サイダーしゅわわわ夏のト・キ・メ・キ
Cider like swoosh! Summer's heart-throb

ゴギブリの夏にシュッと一吹きしてしまいました
Shooh! Blew one puff at cockroach summer

終戦記念日僕には死んだ金魚の方が悲しい
On the day to commemorate war's end
I'm more sad about the dead goldfish

いいわけみつけれず夏の陽は暮れる
Summer sun sets, having found no excuse

コンビニで買った夏の恋がとけちゃった
Summer love I purchased at the convenience store has melted

拝啓。金木犀がお騒がせしています
Dear sir, the osmanthus flowers are raising a fuss

夕焼け小焼けで柘榴が割れる
The pomegranate splits open to the tune of a well-known children's song

枯葉が落ちるそれはクラシックなせんべいの音
Dry leaves falling – that's the classic sound of rice crackers being eaten

寒い 煩悩の出入りするドアを閉める
Cold – I close the door where earthly desires come and go

ポチ袋に入ってた日本晴れ
The clear blue sky kept in a little envelope

お尻から冬の体重を持ち上げる

Raising up the weight of the winter from its rear end

春を壊してしまった海が泣いている

The ocean, which wrecked spring, is crying

空青くにんげん泥だらけ海もあお

Sky blue, humans covered with mud – the ocean is blue too

行く先のない怒りはは神様のせいにしておく

I'll blame this anger which has nowhere to go on the gods

自在に春を操りさくら咲かせたのはだれ

Who is it who manipulates spring at will and makes the cherry blossoms bloom

もう大丈夫サクラがそっと眼を開けた

It's alright now – the cherry blossoms have gently opened their eyes

我が儘いうなら桜の木の下に集まりなさい

If I may say something selfish – all you gather around under the cherry blossoms

三月津波四月原発事故五月はさつき

Tsunami in March, nuclear meltdown in April,
and in May a no confidence vote

宇宙戦艦ヤマトは帰ってくるとさくら散った

When spaceship Yamato returns the cherry blossoms fall



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