

Mother Tongue

Sitting in an izakaya in Tokyo,
I give my order to the barkeeper,
Nothing more than a beer,
But something to knock off the day's sweat.
I wonder if they might extend my transfer here,
Guess there's some persuading to do,
In Japanese.

Waking up to new birds, of a new type of summer,
I get dressed and dash out the door
To meet my train.
I head to the Tokyo division, and show my card,
Get the lift to the office and join the meeting.
With the meeting finished, I then plan with the team,
In Japanese.

I walk back with my colleagues to a ramenya,
We order a meal and laugh about how the boss's coffee
Halved our workload, by spilling onto the papers for us.
We eat our ramen, broth and all,
Drink our drinks, and extend our laughter outside,
In Japanese.

Sunday soon arrives and I pack my bag,
For the day's journey, by train ahead,
As a little trip to see Fujisan is in order.
With the Shinkansen, the journey is made smooth in time.
I walk to the cable car from the last station,
And follow the signs for the viewing sight,
In Japanese.

There, I look upon the mountain, still some way away,
With wisps of cloud stealing the top,
And the waters of Kawaguchiko, mirroring that very theft.
The shop by the platform, having some souvenir magnets,
Well, why not get the typical order for the home folk.
Buying them, I thank the cashier,
In Japanese.

On a sign, by the platform, is the way to a shrine in the woods,
So I follow the track, up through the trees, winding and climbing,
And see the little shrine, with its name on a stone post nearby,
I look up through the great pines, and meet the mountain once more,
Listening, as my heart sings through my mind,
Whose lyrics sound, in a tongue that is less a stranger.