



**The Authentic Voice: Sayumi Kamakura's Journey Through Life and Loss
in 'A Crown of Roses'
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Reviewed by Maria Cristina Azcona

“A Crown of Roses” is a bilingual book of Haiku poetry by Sayumi Kamakura. The book provides a Japanese version by the author herself and translation to English, provided by James Shea and Jim Kacian.

Sayumi is not one of too many. She is called to be remembered as one of the most important Haiku poetesses, worldwide, since she is able to produce haikus that have colorful images, a coherent story and a philosophical meaning, underneath.

This book presents orthodox haikus, although the author flies beyond the limits that the technical structure imposes, being this, her major virtue. This oscillation among classical structures and a singular, unique way to write the haikus, make a genial, exquisite mixture in Sayumi’s poetry. The reader takes immediate contact with her delicate soul, not free from melancholy and isolation. Her flowered imagination submerges the reader from the very beginning, in Japanese cultural meanings.

“A Crown of Roses”

She sends the reader’s daydream from near to far away, making the visions to be panoramic and very rich. Easily manages our imagination and takes power over our feelings too.

For the Stone Queen

Far in the distance

A crown of roses

The book includes lively events in her life story, expertly combined so that they serve as support to the author’s philosophical reasoning, just as it is expectable from an experienced and talented poetess like she is, and much more considering the technique she uses: Haiku. It is organized in six parts, where the author writes some kind of an autobiography.

Sayumi builds a subjectivist story, not as much by the presence of metaphors, but by the permanent presence of psychic, emotional, affective and cognitive state of the author superposed to reality. There is a proliferation of ironic references to the feminine condition and a humorous point of view over feminine attitudes and dramas that fit perfectly in the haiku technique. She is master in generating these small poems that lock up enormous reflections, without also stopping being great truths.

Stupidly,

the floating ice

enjoys the rays of sun



The book is centered in the reflections on the life, the agedness, what happens to husband and wife relationship on time, and ironies on human spirit. She knows how to portray the human soul.

The first part presents successive states of mind during a trip around Europe.

I swallowed

a piece of parsley—

Did I lock the door?

The second part is classical, and seems to be written in a different moment, probably before the trip. All is light, outdoor images and calmness.

*Blue from mountains
to humans, sometimes
it whirls*

In the third part she becomes meditative in an increasing way. She intentionally mixes her own inner world and her external environment, human and not human, remarking the contrast

Water for an iris

that falls easily—

and wine for you

Always suggestive, she recreates an unreal space where the conjugal relationship reaches to be an interesting, dramatic tale where sadness filters up, exposing the crisis after monotony, that come usually on the aging. Everything in harmony: nature repeats and announces the cycle in her life, as she presents it in the book: Spring, but soon the autumn and the winter, and she with her husband, in the middle of this, a cycling life in declination as everything.

In the fourth part she seems to speak of her own familiar life when she says, honoring Chi-yoni

Pale blue threads

from each baby spider

escaping from their home

Haikus, at the fifth part, interconnect the author with other human beings, moving away without letting apart, her orthodox reference to the small natural elements. Doubtlessly, this author knows how to let us know about her inner world when she writes:

I cannot get there—

even though

I carry these roses

The author gains our attention and never loses it. Her key is her own authenticity, since she does not lie, ever. Only presents her naked spirit in front of us, without any dubitation. She knows this is the price to become a famous writer and she pays it instantly. She gives herself to us, with her head ornamented with a crown of roses. She writes from her own inner world, with certain emaciated irony, and from soul to soul, generating the miracle of communication through the insight that only true poets know how to reach up.

I swallowed

a piece of parsley—

Did I lock the door?

Here, in the fifth part is where it remembers me to the great Basho teacher, being successful in obtaining the identification of human spirit with the small natural element, indicating the absolute inherent fragility to our condition, like parts of the nature, in our insignificant existence, far from arrogance. This communication that comes from her otherness unifies the universe from where she writes, (from her own literary schemes, in her own poetic spirit and her own cultural baggage), to arrive without scales to the reader's soul, skin and feeling.

Finally the author succeeds in managing my emotions. Her book affects me, exposing my own age, my own feminine condition and even my marital life and connects with me from that condition, the female condition.

She forces me to become her co-conspirator as rebels in the drama of life. Now we are not a writer and her reader, but only two women in our maturity, anticipating oldness, and finally death.

*For a coffin,
a window,
for the sea, the wind*

As we see, the work of Sayumi is universal because of its sincerity.



Maria Cristina Azcona is a bilingual poet, educational psychologist, and family counselor based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. A global peace advocate, she serves as President of WWPO, Co-founder of ICP Global, and Vice President of Peace, Art, and Culture. Azcona has contributed to UNESCO's EOLSS Encyclopedia and holds honorary roles at institutions such as Columbia University and the University of Oslo. She has authored or co-authored over 20 books in English and Spanish, and was honored with the 2022 Biju Patnaik International Peace Award in India.