

volume—arrangements that allow the boundaries and substance of the page to afford discreet poems a deeper resonance on their own, and when thoughtfully juxtaposed together. Energy to linger or eagerly read on follows, accordingly.

A final noteworthy point to emphasize regarding this splendid book involves comments made in the introductory material. Banwarth and her collaborators take great care to emphasize the influence of individual mentors, fellow haiku poets, editorial partners, and the inspiration of free verse poets whose legacies reside in the wider literary world. Such detailed attention to this valuable context is not often found in published haiku collections. The pivotal figures and events credited here are important to foreground and celebrate, as they remind all artists and readers of English-language haiku of the collective responsibility to record, commemorate, and publish our own paths of learning and homage to influential forebears. The vibrancy of haiku and related short forms for generations to come might rely on it. This too, seems a bare necessity.

Applause for a Cloud, by Sayumi Kamakura, trans. James Shea (Boston, Mass.: Black Ocean, 2025). 260 pages; 5½" × 7 ½". Matte color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN:978-1-939568-99-1. Price: \$25.00 from online booksellers.

Review by Cherie Hunter Day

Sayumi Kamakura is one of Japan's leading haiku poets. She began writing haiku in the mid-1970s and has authored eleven haiku collections, plus numerous essays on contemporary and modern haiku and tanka. In 1998 she cofounded and continues to coedit the international haiku quarterly *Ginyu* along with her husband, Masayuki Inui, whose pen name, Ban'ya Natsuishi, is more familiar to an international haiku audience. *Applause for a Cloud* is Sayumi Kamakura's latest collection. It is a bilingual edition with the poems in Japanese on the lefthand side and English translations by James Shea on the righthand side of each page spread.

In the beginning of the book the translator observes that the haiku section in a Japanese bookstore is usually separate from the poetry section. For him it is a reminder that “... writing haiku for the Japanese is more than a poetic form; it is a type of devotion.” Sayumi Kamakura has devoted her life to haiku. When asked about the difference between poetry and haiku, Kamakura answered that both are expressions of one’s inner self, but because of haiku’s brevity the writer must select the right elements and decide what to keep and what to remove: “it’s a calculation of words.”

Applause for a Cloud is hailed as a “groundbreaking” collection for its intimate associations and use of everyday images. Shea notes that Kamakura’s haiku diverge from the classical Japanese requirements of seventeen moras and season words. Calling attention to this is hardly radical, since English-language haiku writers have had these discussions for fifty years. I’m also struck by Shea’s use of capitalization and punctuation. Again, this seems out of step with the current conventions in English-language haiku. It is interesting to note that an article in *Poetry* magazine (May 2022) titled “Haiku on Shit” by Masaoka Shiki, was translated by Ikuho Amano and James Shea. It included over 100 classical Japanese masters’ haiku presented as single horizontal lines. This seems like a fresh approach, but it makes it more difficult to understand why Shea chose wordy three-line translations of Kamakura’s haiku. Take the following example:

In a field of mustard flowers
just a few ways
for the light to return home

Consider how this haiku could be streamlined to resemble English-language haiku.

mustard field
a path for the light
to return home

This desire to edit makes me regret that I don’t read Japanese and must rely on a translator as an intermediary to convey meaning. I’m indebted

to translators, who bridge the gap in language and culture, but it comes with a loss of immediacy.

Sayumi Kamakura's haiku are playful and have a sense of lightness and humor.

Let's just bloom
instead of getting angry —
the crocuses

The moss phlox —
let me stay
as a puppy

A playful summer —
leave those heavy rocks
with the ocean

Not sure in this mist —
a tyrannosaurus
or my husband

Some of her work is markedly feminine in subject matter and emotional tone. Rising almost to the level of tanka, they remain distinctly haiku.

A cloudy morning —
a woman's body
opens easily

Sitting on the grass —
tired of my bag
and motherhood

Lamenting the end of spring
as I give my mouth
some lipstick

It won't say things
like *you're pretty* —
the winter mirror

These lighter haiku balance her haiku in the third section of the collection about her husband's illness and the Covid-19 pandemic.

A tulip blooms alone
and trembles when
held by two people

Like stars to the night,
my husband
tied to tubes

Another hallmark of this collection is Kamakura's use of personification, anthropomorphism, and simile. English-language haiku writers frequently sidestep these Western poetry techniques. Shea confirms that Kamakura likes the way anthropomorphism "opens her imagination and

allows for haiku that are not focused solely on reality.” Her treatment strengthens the notion that humans are an integral part of nature. It also may be the case that her use of these literary devices is an outreach to appeal to a wider audience.

The river empties
into the sea—its eyes and
mouth wide open (personification)

The sky's still alright
says the plum
growing fat (anthropomorphism)

I reject it:
the cold
like a pebble — (simile)

I would qualify Sayumi Kamakura’s haiku as approachable especially when compared with the emotionally pitched and surreal haiku written by her husband. She does go into surreal territory and readers can certainly see the result of these two dynamic poets working closely together.

On a green summer night,
a horse of glass
neighs in the distance

Red balloon —
come back if you can meet
your mother

While the conventions are slightly different than what we typically see in contemporary English-language haiku journals, *Applause for a Cloud* allows more readers additional access to the work of this important Japanese haiku poet. I recommend this book.