

WAITING FOR SUNSET
TO BURY RED CAMELLIAS by Miho Kinnas

Reviewed by Tim Conroy

Waiting for Sunset to Bury Red Camellias (Free Verse Press, 2023) is Miho Kinnas' third brilliant poetry collection. Free Verse Press' Marcus Amaker, former poet Laureate of the City of Charleston, publishes Miho's poetic visions with reverent detail.

Kinnas' previous collections, *Today, Fish Only*, and *Move Over, Bird* (Math Paper Press), exemplify the power of poems crafted with patterns, objects, and observations. In 2023, a poetry collaboration with the lyrical and prolific poet E. Ethelbert Miller, *We Eclipse into the Other Side*, published by Pinyon Publishing, shows her willingness to combine styles to encourage us to explore. Her previous collections are the background, the shading, and the light for *Waiting for Sunset to Bury Red Camellias*. This collection showcases a poet using her full artistry and heart to create new poems.

The collection includes Kinnas' "Three Shrimp Boats on the Horizon," first published by Wet Cement Magazine and later anthologized in *Best American Poetry 2023*. "Three Shrimp Boats on the Horizon" displays Kinnas' sudoku whimsicality and how three sets of nine ship shape words capture images until they are gone.

To encounter Kinnas' poems in *Waiting for Sunset to Bury Red Camellias* with awareness, keep present that Japanese is Kinnas' first language, poetic forms like Tanka and Haiku are her aesthetic playground, she is a translator of poetry, and above all, she is a playful blender and creator of forms. In this collection, she experiments with sequences, combining sequences and longer lines while using objects and senses to ground her poetry. It's like Kinnas imagines language as not absolute, always being translated, and her poems become what she sees, hears, smells, feels, and holds. Here is an example from her poem, "Hometown," of how Kinnas triggers a memory with an ordinary object.

I hear my name
In my mother's voice.
A missing shoe.

Kinnas stretches her cultural canvas from the Low Country of South Carolina to Japan. Her poetry becomes an irresistible amalgamation of both. Where are we? You might wonder when reading her poems, "Full to the Brim."

A blade to the sea rides the tide
carrying a dragonfly on its belly.

Inspired by Chinese history, there is a feminist theme throughout her twelve-part poem, "Work of Art," which begins its exploration with "For My Sisters," Kinnas bases the twelfth part of the poem on The Pillow Book, a creative non-fiction written by Sei Shonagon in the 11th century. Her last lines shift between present and past, concluding with a haunting warning.

A child eating strawberries.

I was the child eating strawberries.

We cannot return, we cannot give up.

Kinnas' concreteness and distillation of phrasing, how her objects convey meaning and emotion, and the flashes of colors and smells in her stanzas glide across the page with the ease of a frog's kick. Kinnas creates tension with her line breaks, while her phrasing and creative forms leave us wanting to explore. Her poetry brings us to what we have neglected to note, the lingering whiff of toast in the room, and asks us to hold onto depth by translating them in tangibility. Spend afternoon with Kinnas' poems and experience the sensual pleasure of

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