

reviewed

Donna Bauerly. *Raymond Roseliep: Man of Art Who Loves the Rose*, Winchester, VA: The Haiku Foundation, 2015, 198 pp., perfect bound. ISBN 978-0-9837141-2-5. US\$15.95 plus postage (\$3 for US, \$15 for other countries) from thehaikufoundation.org.

Reviewed by Lisa Higgs

"What can she unearth / beyond the comfortable mask?": On Raymond Roseliep by Donna Baurely

At the end of the preface of Donna Bauerly's extensively researched biography, *Raymond Roseliep: Man of Art Who Loves the Rose*, she notes that her subject had no interest in a biography outside his oeuvre. Readers later learn that Roseliep left no personal journals or diaries to aid future biographers, although he did leave a trove of files related to his writing and correspondence. From a seeming edict of lack, Bauerly has opted to take Roseliep at his word, filling her exploration of this haiku master with salient and insightful poems that resonate with each of her chapter headings, from Son to Poet to Sobi-Shi. As such, Raymond Roseliep is as much a comprehensive collection of a celebrated poet as it is that poet's life story.

While Bauerly begins with the "begats" of Raymond Roseliep, peppering her discussion of family with a strong selection of poetry, such as:

her hourglass figure
in
my father's watch

and, likely for his brother Louis, returned from World War II:

you have come home,
weak-eyed brother
leaving the stars at war

she soon leaves the chronological trail behind, opting instead to create a circular path through writing life of Roseliep. For instance, Bauerly's discussion of Roseliep as scholar begins with references to *Sun in His Belly* (1977) and *The Linen Bands* (1961), remarks on Roseliep's high school and college writing and awards (late 1930s), and ends with a 1963 interview that brings readers to Roseliep around the age of seven (1924) deciding he wanted to be a priest. This overlapping approach to Roseliep's life allows each chapter to stand on its own based on the theme elicited by the chapter headings—or "hallmarks"—Bauerly has selected. Taken as a whole, the turning of each chapter in and out of a solid timeline does leave moments of Roseliep's life obliquely explored—most prominently the question of what caused Roseliep to enter St. Mary's Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. Although mention of Roseliep's hospital stay is mentioned in several chapters, what incited his decline hovers tantalizingly out of reach:

Rabe was aware of circumstances that stressed Roseliep so deeply that he could not speak normally, even to say Mass. After St. Mary's, Roseliep was never granted permission to return to Loras to teach but was assigned instead to be chaplain at Holy Family Hall, a retirement center for Franciscan sisters.

The circumstances of which Rabe was aware are never made clear to readers, to the detriment of our understanding of this complex priest and poet.

While Bauerly's chapters on Roseliep as poet and haijin provide an expansive look at Roseliep's writing and its reception in the American poetry community, some of the most intriguing passages involve her critical scholarship of Roseliep's work,

particularly when multiple haiku are addressed across several pages. Her perceptive criticism of Roseliep's poetry and haiku add another ring of insight into the elusive persona that Bauerly is attempting to capture. Her chapter on Roseliep as sensei is especially effective in that it provides an in-depth exploration of the changing landscape of haiku as written in English by American poets during Roseliep's lifetime. Roseliep—shown throughout the biography to be a man of exact ideas unafraid to contest others' authority—had revolutionary thoughts about haiku in subject, form, and style. Bauerly presents the inner workings of this haiku master's mind as an essential guidebook to writers and readers of haiku, though one senses Roseliep himself might argue that such a guide needs to exist, or that haiku needs definition.

Equal parts anthology, biography, and record of close reading, *Raymond Roseliep: Man of Art Who Loves the Rose* provides essential information about a major American *haijin* who challenged tradition and defied definitions—for the poetry he wrote and for his own person. Bauerly's book offers readers no conclusions on this inscrutable man, who by the end is both more and less an enigma. One longs for a treasure chest brimming with answers: reflections on a decision to enter the priesthood; medical records to better diagnose his breakdown, his loss of speaking voice. A string of misplaced love letters to give body and face to Roseliep's erotic poetry. Something, anything personal that would provide "Roseliep's own stance about his passion and the real life struggles it cost him, internally and externally." Without these materials, we must return to the work so replete in this book, which seems to have been Roseliep's intent all along.

Postscript: I would be remiss in failing to note my own relation to Loras College, where Roseliep long taught, and with two of Roseliep's students, Donna Bauerly and Bill Pauly, my own poetry mentors, with whom I took undergraduate courses in the mid-1990s.

Bruce Ross et al, eds. *A Vast Sky: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku*, Bangor, ME: Tancho Press, 2015, 198 pp., perfect bound. ISBN 978-0-9837141-2-5. US\$15.95 plus postage (\$3 for US, \$15 for other countries) from Bruce Ross (dr_bruce_ross@hotmail.com).

Reviewed by Klaus-Dieter Wirth

It was surely high time for the publication of another international haiku anthology after Canadian André Duhaime's daring attempt in 1998 *Haiku sans frontières—une anthologie mondiale* (Les Éditions David), and Greek Zoe Savina's *International Haiku: "the leaves are back on the tree"—International Anthology* in 2002. At last a fresh attempt was made by Bruce Ross, who succeeded in bringing Kōko Katō from Japan, Dietmar Tauchner from Austria, and Patricia Prime from New Zealand on board as coeditors. A much smaller and more modest book was produced in comparison to Duhaime's anthology of 441 pages and Savina's of 468 pages. Size is not everything, of course, and we have to thank the chief editor for his creative audacity.

Certain readers will be in luck: United States, Australia, New Zealand, and partly as well from Japan. I can only support the idea of granting the motherland of haiku an extensive extra section, but all examples, as might have been expected of its subeditor Kōko Katō, follow in form and content the parameters of the traditional style (dentō haiku). Thus we as readers are given insight into the diversity within this frame, but do not get a chance to discover what modern (*gendai*) haiku is like. No "enfant terrible" or "flying pope" by Ban'ya Natsuishi. One-sidedness doesn't match the requirements of a comprehensive compendium.

Regrettably imbalance prevails throughout the book in its lack of equal distribution of haiku per country, or consideration of the importance of a country's haiku activities. It is a compilation with a strong Anglophilic orientation, with the rest of the world mainly serving as backup.