

I first met Bill in 1988 as a part of the planning for a haiku festival in Dubuque, Iowa commemorating the fifth anniversary of Raymond Roseliep's death. I was struck by his warmth and generosity as well as his mischievous, impish nature. He shared the handout he used for his haiku classes; on it he had a quote from Kurt Vonnegut, "Pity the reader." That three-word admonition became a permanent guidepost on my haiku journey. On his teacher Raymond Roseliep's grave marker there is a quote from one of Roseliep's most famous haiku: "AGAINST THE NIGHT." If there is anything today that is proof against the night, it is Bill Pauly's haiku. Don't miss them.

Lips Licked Clean: Selected Haiku of Sugita Hisajo, trans. Alice Wanderer (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2021). 152 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-85-2. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by Julie Schwerin

I was immediately drawn to Sugita Hisajo when I saw her described in Makoto Ueda's *Far Beyond the Field: Haiku by Japanese Women* as one who "worked hard to compose haiku while neglecting domestic chores."

reading a play —
the winter evening's crockery
left to soak

Ueda further described her trailblazing efforts as a female haijin in early twentieth-century Japan. Hisajo became a member of the Hototogisu writing group led by Shiki disciple, Takahama Kyoshi, and was a regular contributor to the magazine's "The Kitchen Miscellanies" column along with other promising female poets of the time. She even started her own magazine for women only—*Hanagoromo*.

In *Lips Licked Clean: Selected Haiku of Sugita Hisajo*, Alice Wanderer, herself a haiku poet, offers one hundred and twenty English haiku translations of Hisajo's prize-winning poetry in five seasonal sections including The New Year. The translations are presented one per page with the original, its *romaji*, and a footnote that identifies the *kigo* and sometimes offers clarifying notes.

An introduction reveals the hardships of Hisajo's life including the pain of illness, an unsatisfying marriage, and an unexpected expulsion from the Hototogisu circle in 1936 that left her devastated. Some poems in this collection reflect Hisajo's role as a mother: poems which include a child's first day of school, the sound of her children quarreling, and "every fairytale read to death." Personally, I was won over by the person, beyond the motherhood, of Hisajo. In this selection of works, I see a sensuous woman who exhibits a presence, openness, and union with her surroundings. For example,

chilly nights —
 pulled through the cloth
 silk thread shrieks

The reader shares the chill in the air, the feel of the cloth, the tug on the needle, even the sound the thread makes as it passes through the cloth. In other poems, Hisajo delights in the sounds her slippers make on a chilly night, the feel of her freshly washed hair, and the comfort of sitting in a moonlit cane chair as it dries. She stands perfectly still as the wind whisks thousands of lotus petals around her, taking in the silky caress and heady fragrance of the petals, the whooshing of the wind, and the wonder of the moment. Even in poor health, she soaks in her surroundings.

still sick —
 I lean against wrecked boat
 sun basking

And when she heals, she is fully back in her senses.

young grass shoots —
 every sense awakens
 in this no-longer-sickly wife

A childlike side of Hisajo is also apparent. Playful Hisajo chases a butterfly until she is lost. She joins children to hunt salamanders and sucks nectar from banana flowers. She runs her fingers through a pond's algae until they turn green. Even more endearing, she is able to laugh at her own silliness.

melting into a smile
 winter rouge stuck to them —
 her front teeth

She seems to feel most herself in these moments of childlike abandon.

making echoes
 the mountain lesser cuckoo —
 free as could be

Grounded in the physical world and in her own body, Hisajo is a woman who is not just comfortable, but fully in her own skin ...

the loose curves
 of this gourd —
 a perfect shape

Wanderer's astute translations give evidence, not only of her intimate knowledge and understanding of Sugita Hisajo's poetry, but of her great admiration for it as well. To have the selections and translations informed by another female *haijin* seems paramount to this literary work for English-language readers.

Hisajo has plenty of accomplishments to her name, yet her poetry clearly speaks for itself. She will remain known as an important poet not just for her gender and her time but for the whole of the genre in its present and future as well.