

Nor do they explain why nine different issues of *Modern Haiku* were involved over a period of ten years after Roseliep's death. They have left these puzzles for other scholars to solve,

#### ROSELIEP'S LEGACY ASSURED

Poets toil in relative obscurity compared to those in other literary endeavors. The vast majority know that their work, no matter how well received, will eventually be tossed into history's waste bin. The only chance for them to avoid this fate depends on their having followers—relatives, friends, scholars—willing to commit money and time to keep the memory of their work alive.

*The Collected Haiku of Raymond Roseliep* is a scholarly triumph for Randy and Shirley Brooks and also proves that the support of The Roseliep Legacy Group is well-deserved. While readers will quibble about whether many of the haiku are true to the form, this doesn't matter. All of the work within is poetry. And, in the end, this will be all that matters.

Discovered beside Roseliep's deathbed was this poem, believed to be his last (p. 205):

of berry  
nip  
you dissolve

*Sour Pickle: One-Line Haiku*, by Stuart Quine (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2018). 108 pages; 6" x 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-910185-95-7. Price: \$16.00 from [www.albapublishing.com](http://www.albapublishing.com)

*Reviewed by Dave Read*

*Sour Pickle*, the debut collection of Stuart Quine, is a book that exclusively features one-line haiku. Quine utilizes this short form as his vehicle for tackling themes such as the process of change and the

interaction of nature and humanity. The ninety-nine poems also showcase many of the strengths, and a couple of the shortcomings, of the one-line form. As such, *Sour Pickle* provides a good study of single line haiku.

There is a great deal of change featured in the imagery of Quine's haiku. Quine recognizes that our natural world is not static, and frequently details its state of flux. For example:

snagged in machair a gull feather unzipped by the wind

And:

a morning for meandering foam flecked the running brook

Whether it's the blowing wind or the running brook, the movement within nature continues, creating change as it progresses. However, there are moments when change seems to come to a stop, where the process of transition folds in on itself:

waiting at the departure gate a discussion of the bardos

The bardos, in Buddhism, is the state between life and death. As such, it is an apt metaphor for "waiting at the departure gate". No longer home and not yet moving towards the next destination, waiting for an airplane feels like a withdrawal from motion and time. Likewise:

defiant in thin rain the toad on the garden path

Much like the toad, we often resist or stand defiant against change. We dig in our heels; refuse to acknowledge the transitions from one state to the next. Whether it is aging, death, or distaste for the weather, we vainly stand our ground, fight the process of change against which we inevitably lose.

Quine also uses one-line haiku to explore the interaction of nature and humanity. Time and again Quine highlights the power of nature, and how humans and human structures cannot compete with its force. Our losses may come in small ways:

beach barbeque the hissing of coals in the sudden shower

But nature will flex its muscles; demonstrate its true force and the inability of human-made structures to resist it:

through broken timbers the surging surf under the pier

However, the force of nature is not always destructive. Its dominion can be subtle:

through a notch in the hill the sun's first rays enter the timber henge

Or it may choose to wield its strength over time:

chambered cairn a mosaic of lichen on the sunken capstone

On the flip side, humanity's attempts to impose its will on nature are ultimately in vain, as Quine humorously shows in the following haiku:

as I explain game theory the Siamese walks away with her tail held high

Beyond theme, *Sour Pickle* can be read as a means of understanding the strengths of the one-line haiku form. One strength of a well written one-liner is its ability to be read in various ways. Being able to cut the poem in more than one place can create many phrases and fragments for juxtaposition. Quine provides several haiku whose richness of texture increases as a result of effectively utilizing multiple breaks. Take for example:

intimate with daemons I embrace the light

There are three distinct ways this poem can be read. The first reading comes with the break after "intimate":

intimate / with daemons I embrace the light

Here, “intimate” is juxtaposed against “with daemons I embrace the light”. As such, the implication is that the action of embracing the light with his daemons is the cause of the intimacy.

The haiku can also be read with a cut after “daemons”:

intimate with daemons / I embrace the light

In this reading, the narrator is intimate, or familiar, with daemons from the outset. His embracing of the light may be understood as his attempt to move away from his daemons.

Finally, the poem can be read with a break after “embrace”:

intimate with daemons I embrace / the light

The last interpretation portrays an arrival of light with the intimacy of embracing daemons. It is an unusual image, but one that is possible due to the creativity with which the poem was constructed. However a reader prefers to interpret it, Quine’s thoughtfully crafted one-line haiku provides a complexity, depth, and range of possibilities not typically found in a poem of seven words.

Another benefit of the one-line technique comes through its ability to run the poem’s images together. With no line breaks, a one-liner is naturally read at a faster speed than other poems. Quine has included many haiku that make great use of the increased tempo of the one-line form. Consider:

fluting and whistling across the field the five-bar gate

The pace of the gate’s sounds rushing across the fields is palpable. Had this haiku been written in three lines, it would not have been as effective. The line breaks would have slowed the poem’s pace and weakened the sense of sweeping sound. On another note, Quine’s selection of the word “bar” is excellent. It can refer to both the physical bars of which the gate was built and the bars of music the squeaky gate creates as it “flutes” and “whistles”.

While the bulk of the haiku in *Sour Pickle* are strong, well-written one-line poems, there are a few that are either three-line haiku disguised as one-liners, or phrases that read more like statements than haiku. For example:

midnight the empty slot in the knife block

Make no mistake; this is a very strong poem. However, it cannot be cut effectively in more than one place, and is actually hampered, instead of enriched, by the speed at which its one-line is read. The content of a haiku needs to match its form. Had Quine written this poem in three lines, with line breaks after “midnight” and “slot”, the pauses would have made the surprise impact of “the knife block” even more dramatic.

Similarly, there are a small number of haiku in *Sour Pickle* that read more like statements than poems. With one image or no juxtaposition, these haiku do little to engage the reader and create space into which he can bring his experiences or interpretations. For instance:

nothing in the mailbox but a crisp brown leaf

Even so, this one-liner is one word away from being a very good poem. Had Quine removed the word “but”, he would have been left with a haiku that could be cut in two places (after “nothing” and “mailbox”), resulting in a poem with greater interpretative possibilities.

Stuart Quine’s *Sour Pickle* is a strong collection. It addresses themes such as the process of change and the interaction of humanity and nature while exploring the form of one-line haiku in depth. This book is recommended to all readers of haiku, particularly those with an interest in discovering more about one-line poems.