

Ultimately, I highly recommend *City Beach* as a dive into the creative vision of Dee Evetts and his sharing of an obviously full life that engages in poetry, prose, and photography. ◻■

#### REVIEWED BY JACOB D. SALZER

*Milkweed: Selected Haiku & Senryu of Alexis Rotella* edited by Randy and Shirley Brooks (Brooks Books, Taylorville, IL: 2024). 156 pages, 6.5" x 9.5". Hardback, clothbound. ISBN: 978-1-929820-30-5. \$30 from [www.brooksbooks.com](http://www.brooksbooks.com)

Alexis Rotella is a well-known figure in the English-language haiku community. This book celebrates some of her best haiku and senryu written over the past 46 years. The editors, Randy and Shirley Brooks, have done a fine job with their selections and with the layout of this book to give readers a real glimpse into Rotella's life and poetry.

In the preface, Rotella writes: "The name of this book, *Milkweed*, I believe captures the fact that even though I did not give birth to biological children, my creativity took flight from the mother plant seeding haiku wherever I am or wherever I go. My hope is that my offerings have inspired and will inspire others to devote their creative life to this tiny poetic form which brings joy and solace to people the world over."

The introduction by John Stevenson sets a reflective tone for Rotella as he acknowledges her dedication to writing haiku for over 40 years. Indeed, as Rotella enters the last years of this lifetime, she is leaving behind a legacy.

I will now write about my favorite haiku & senryu in this book, followed by brief commentary.

Floating through galaxies  
of Queen Anne's lace  
a white moth

I appreciate how the cosmic and earthly perspectives become one in this haiku. I enjoy seeing Queen Anne's lace in a new way, in a new light. I think the moth adds to the magical and quiet atmosphere of this haiku.

Blackberry pickers —  
a child's laugh escapes  
from an old woman's body

I appreciate how the blackberries transports the old woman back in time. I grew up picking blackberries so I was also transported into my own childhood memories. I like how this haiku reminds us that it's never too late to be a child again.

Family reunion  
so many patches  
on the old screen door

I appreciate how the patches on the weathered screen door speak of the complex relationships within a family. When I read "patches," I see psychological wounds and arguments in a family, but also sincere apologies and reconciliation.

Ancient burial ground  
shards of beer bottles  
glisten in the mud

The past, the present, and the future collide in this haiku with vivid imagery. I think of the history of beer when I read this haiku and its role through the ages. I also think of our ancestors and their deep connections to the Earth.

An orphan asks  
if I'm her grandma  
honeysuckle rain

This is a very touching haiku with a powerful juxtaposition that aptly shows the complex emotions and feelings of this moment.

Telling its side  
of the story  
gurgles of the creek

I deeply appreciate how Rotella is revealing the voice of the creek in this haiku. The water quality of this creek will also reveal many stories and will give us a clear idea of the health of the surrounding eco-system and the people who live nearby.

Blind date —  
not expecting  
the white cane

I appreciate Rotella's sense of humor in this book, and this senryu above is a great example.

This book also includes Awards & Acknowledgments, which includes the following: (1) A Short Biography of Alexis Rotella, (2) Books by Alexis Rotella - In Chronological Order, (3) Journals Edited by Alexis Rotella, (4) Acknowledgments of Anthology Publications, (5) Acknowledgements of Journal Publications, (6) Essays and Feature Stories About Alexis Rotella, and (7) Haiku and Senryu Awards to Alexis Rotella.

Rotella's haiku and senryu in *Milkweed* reveal her authentic voice and personality throughout an impressive range of subjects, from nature-based scenes, to relationships, family life, humorous moments, social challenges, and difficult times. I appreciate her honest, unfiltered approach to writing haiku and senryu. For those who are familiar with Rotella's work, this is a celebration of her long haiku journey. For those who are new to Rotella's poetry, you will be touched in many ways, with fresh subjects at each turn of the page. I highly recommend this book. ◻■