

*Unsealing Our Secrets: A Short Poem Anthology About Sexual Abuse.* Alexis Rotella, Curator/Editor. (2018, Jade Mountain Press, Arnold, MD) 131 pages, 6"x9".

*Reviewed by Deb Koen*

No longer a secret. No longer the silence. Women and a few men share their deeply personal stories in this collection of poems in Japanese forms including haiku, senryu, tanka, haiga and cherita.

The cover of the anthology includes #MeToo, connecting to the larger local and international movement drawing attention to the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. Curator/Editor Alexis Rotella says that this was not an easy anthology to put together, to which I would add, nor is this an easy anthology to read. Not easy but certainly compelling.

As Margaret Atwood, acclaimed Canadian author and activist, reminds us, "The best way of keeping a secret is to pretend there isn't one." The poets in this collection have found the courage to release, and the language to express, their secrets. They invite the reader into painful experiences with the potential for healing through poetry.

The concentrated nature of these poems in short form, combined with the recognition of many names familiar to the haiku community, adds to the impact of the reading. As Rotella says, "The narratives here speak for themselves whether told in a raw screaming voice or simply a squeak." These poetic voices from around the world open their secrets and the door for others to explore, and possibly give voice to, their own secrets.

