

The Searchable World by Peter Newton (2017, Maplevie Publishing, no place). 116 pages, 5×7", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-64007-528-3. \$15 from thepeternewton@gmail.com.

Melissa Allen

I opened Peter Newton's *The Searchable World* to the first haiku, the one from which the collection takes its name, and—I'll admit it—gasped.

tide pool
the searchable world
we live in

It's been a while since I've read a haiku that did so well what the best haiku do, which is make us forget exactly where the boundaries are around things. Do our lives take place in the solid natural world, or in the absorbing, half-real world of technology, mediated by Google? In the course of eight words, Newton holds both these worlds up together in the light and moves them slowly toward each other until they merge, like a cold front and a warm front creating a storm in our brains. There's a clap of thunder—a burst of syllables—and we're startled out of our ordinary, dull perceptions into a deeper understanding of reality. We'll never again forget that everywhere we go, we're searching.

This blurring of boundaries, it seems from Newton's introduction, is his goal as a poet. He says, "Ever since I started reading, writing and studying haiku seriously more than twenty years ago, some sort of barrier was removed between me and the rest of the world." The best haiku in *The Searchable World* show us the world from this undefended, fearless position.

birthday roses
adding the packet
that keeps them alive

timing the eggs
with a tiny hourglass...
deep winter

The collection is structured in a very natural, if traditional, way for a book of haiku—seasonally, moving from one new year all the way through to another. The movement seems graceful and inevitable, like the best renku, the communal literary game in which the genre of haiku was born: bound by rigid rules, like time itself, and yet utterly free within those rules to roam widely, to dare and to explore.

world news tonight candles vs. Kalashnikovs

mid-life
a minor god
in your average myth

If I have any reservation about *The Searchable World*, it's the same reservation I have about much other contemporary haiku, which sometimes seems too content to make obvious associations rather than reach for a more revelatory connection. Unless jokes and puns are merely the visible, floating portion of an iceberg of meaning that extends much deeper, they're bound to be ultimately unsatisfying.

stars and bars
no changing
someone's stripes

small town diner
two guys question
central intelligence

But pedestrian verse in this collection is far outnumbered by poems that drop us quietly into some corner of the world we thought we knew, tap us on the shoulder, and point quietly at

something we somehow have never seen before and might not ever have seen if Peter Newton hadn't happened by to make a note of it. I don't know how he does it, but I'm grateful that he does.

the moon knows
how I feel
5% full

headlong off the jetty
when I was
a superhero

BRIEFLY REVIEWED

by Randy Brooks

American Haiku: New Readings edited by Toru Kiuchi (2017, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD). 356 pages, 6×9", four-color laminated cover, casebound. ISBN 978-1-4985-2717-0. \$110 from rowman.com.

American Haiku: New Readings explores the history and development of haiku by American writers. In the introduction Toru Kiuchi writes "American haiku has never been more active than it is today in 2015. There are more major American poets writing haiku than at any time in this century. More scholars and researchers begin to pay attention to American haiku. According to 'Haiku Resources: A Scholar's Library of Haiku in English,' published in *Juxtapositions: The Journal of Haiku Research and Scholarship*, an online journal launched by The Haiku Foundation in May 2015, scholarly books and articles dealing with American haiku have appeared numerously placing American haiku into the broader contexts of criticism" (xvi). Edited by professor